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THE WAKE-UP CALL

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ROCKETS, RIOTS, SERMONS, AND SOCCER:

CHRISTIAN VIEWS ON THE CONFLICT IN GAZA AND ISRAEL

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TOP NEWS ▶▶▶▶

Joe Biden orders review of COVID origins as lab leak theory debated



Biden's unusual public disclosure about private and inconclusive U.S. intelligence assessments revealed a debate raging within his administration over where the novel coronavirus originated. (AP)

President Joe Biden ordered aides to find answers to the origin of the virus that causes COVID-19, saying on Wednesday that U.S. intelligence agencies are pursuing rival theories potentially including the possibility of a laboratory accident in China. Intelligence agencies are considering two

likely scenarios but still lack strong confidence in their conclusions and are hotly debating which is more probable, Biden said. The conclusions were detailed in a report to Biden, who asked his team in March to detail whether the novel coronavirus "emerged

▶▶▶ FULL STORY ON -07

ISLAMIC RADICALS KILL 15 CHRISTIANS IN ATTACK ON BAPTISM CELEBRATION IN BURKINA FASO



Suspected jihadists ambushed a baptism ceremony where they killed 15 Christians in northern Burkina Faso's Oudalan province

near the Mali border, according to a report. The attack occurred in the Adjarara area, about 4 miles from Tin-Akoff, on Tuesday, the Sahel region's governor, Col. Salfo Kabor, confirmed in a statement, the U.S.-based persecution watchdog International Christian Concern

reported Friday. "People are shocked and many are running,"

▶▶▶ FULL STORY ON -08

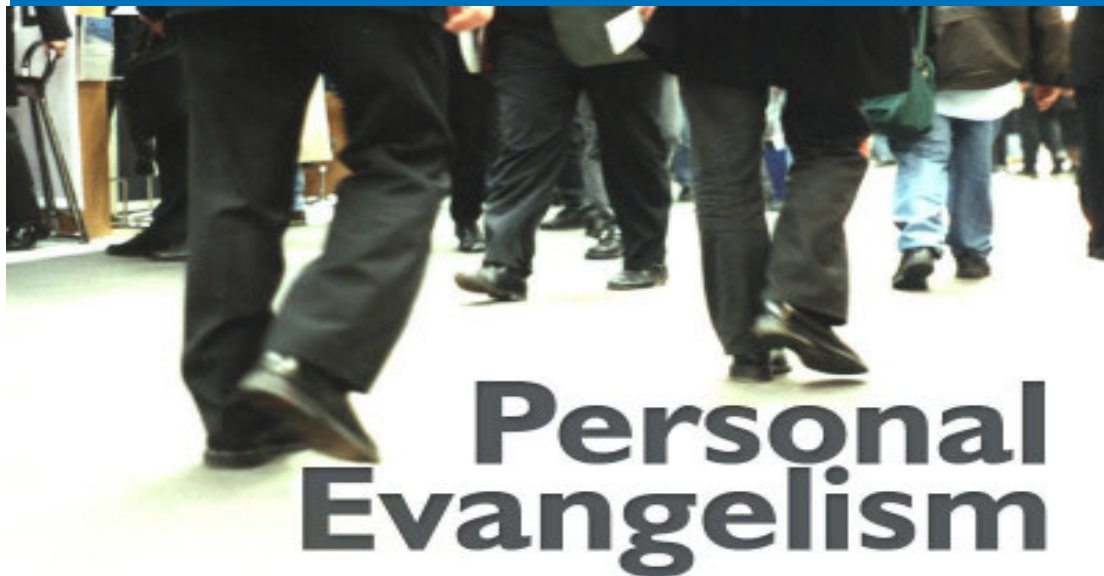
AMERICAN CHRISTIANS HELP FUND THOUSANDS OF BOMB SHELTERS TO PROTECT ISRAELIS FROM HAMAS ATTACKS



As Israel has been bombarded with thousands of missiles fired by Hamas over the past two weeks, American Christians have provided aid from afar by helping fund mobile bomb

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The Significance of Personal Evangelism



Rev. Manuel Joseph Th.M.
Sub-editor, End-Time News

Personal evangelism is the obligation of every single believer. God calls each of us to different responsibilities and bestows us with different gifts, but the goal is the same—the salvation of the lost (1 Corinthians 12:6–7; Luke 19:10). He places us in strategic positions for influence, not privilege. We have neighbors, coworkers, friends, and

relatives who need to hear the good news about Jesus. Whether we're called to lead evangelistic crusades or simply cultivate a relationship with an unsaved neighbor, personal evangelism should be the driving force in our lives. Jesus' words spoken to His disciples more than two thousand years ago still apply to His followers today: "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no

one can work" (John 9:4). As long as we have breath, we can do personal evangelism. As long as we stay surrendered to the Holy Spirit, He will do it through us (Luke 12:12). When Jesus practiced "personal evangelism," He often seemed to make it more difficult for those who showed interest (Luke 9:57–62). His encounter with the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16–24 is a good

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Rockets, Riots, Sermons, and Soccer: Christian Views on the Conflict in Gaza and Israel

Bombs fall in Gaza as rockets target Israel. Frustrated Arab rioters are met by extremist Jewish settlers. And in the middle of it all, Danny Kopp sent his boys out to play soccer. Numbers were down at the Jerusalem neighborhood park frequented by Jew and Arab alike, but his 13-, 10-, and 8-year-old sons still translated between the sides. “These encounters, as small as they are, remind belligerents that coexistence is still viable,” said the chairman of the Evangelical Alliance in Israel. “Wholesale vilifying is simply inaccurate.”



jured, and 52,000 displaced from their homes. But 160 of these have been militant fighters, said Israeli authorities. Hamas’s indiscriminate barrage has launched more than 4,000 rockets and killed 12 people—including two children—while injuring hundreds. Israel’s Iron Dome defense system has intercepted most rockets, but Iranian spon-

build Gaza. The US would prevent such aid from restocking Hamas’s arsenal, while allowing the replenishing of the Iron Dome’s defenses.

The weapons evolve, though the animosity is familiar.

But what has shocked and saddened a dozen sources interviewed by CT—half Jewish and half Palestinian—is the ethnic violence that has torn through previously peaceful towns of coexistence. In Lod, Haifa, Nazareth, and elsewhere, Arab rioters have set 10 synagogues and more than 100 Jewish homes on fire, while looting or damaging hundreds more.

Israel called up 7,000 reservists to quell the violence. But reports say police have been far more lenient with Jewish settlers who have responded in kind, though with less damage. Video recordings, however, depict settler attempts to seize Arab Israeli properties.

The outbreak of violence is tied to Israeli legal proceedings to evict Palestinians from their homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. The families have resided there for generations, and the land dispute has alternate explanations. Protests were met with violence, which then spread to the al-Aqsa Mosque. Hamas fired rockets in solidarity.

And amid the backdrop of this quagmire, Kopp sent out his children.

On Saturday, he preached the same mes-



But it is easy to do, if attached to a favored narrative. Since the outbreak of fighting on May 10, Israeli bombs have leveled almost 450 buildings in Gaza, including six hospitals, nine health centers, and the headquarters of the Associated Press. Hamas authorities count 232 dead, including 39 women and 65 children. More than 1,900 people have been in-

sorship of Hamas has led to a dramatic increase in missiles able to target Jerusalem. Such long-range weapons represent 17 percent of the thousands of missiles fired this month. Nine years ago, they represented only 1 percent.

A ceasefire is now in place. President Joe Biden pledged to work through the United Nations and the Palestinian Authority to re-

▶▶▶ **FULL STORY ON - 03**

sage to his mixed Jewish-Arab Narkis Street Congregation in Jerusalem, asking his flock to purposefully hear both sides.

“Jesus constantly broke out of his information bubble,” he said, “engaging every kind of person imaginable and on a consistent basis.”

Across the separation wall, however, Munther Isaac’s Sunday sermon had a different tone.

“What is required is not calm and restraint,” said the pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem. “What is required is to call things by their names.” This includes antisemitism, Isaac told CT. Yet he also highlighted the 2020 Jerusalem Declaration, created by Jewish scholars to clarify when criticism of Israel or Zionism crosses the line while specifying that criticism in itself is not antisemitism.

But Isaac’s focus was on “occupation” and “ethnic cleansing”—and “apartheid.” B’Tselem, a leading Israeli human rights organization, recently published that the state’s effective control of the West Bank and Gaza makes the controversial term appropriate.

Isaac then asked Palestinian Christians to act appropriately: with nonviolent resistance. And he asked believers in the West to likewise act: with vocal advocacy.

“Christ died a victim of raging violence and religious extremism,” he preached. “But because we believe in the Resurrection, the last word is justice.”

Such preaching, however, riles fellow Palestinian evangelical Khalil Sayegh.

“The Palestinian church response has been largely in line with our society’s polarized state,” said the Philos Project fellow. “One-sided narratives only inflame people’s anger.”

Born and raised in the Gaza Strip, Sayegh acknowledges the appropriate call for justice. But it is simultaneously necessary for each group to reach out to the other.

Israel and Hamas will eventually reach a ceasefire. But given the ethnic strife, popular wounds now run deeper than before.

“If we are not comforting each other while suffering,” Sayegh said, “we won’t be any closer to a solution when the situation begins to improve.”

Sources told CT they are doing so, but the impact has been mixed. Sayegh has experienced a lack of empathy from some. Ron Cantor said a Palestinian Christian pastor sent him well wishes for his birthday.

But reconciliation is difficult.

“We have made attempts,” said Cantor,

president of Shelanu TV, Israel’s only 24/7 digital Hebrew gospel channel. “But in all honesty, there is mistrust on both sides.”

This past Saturday, Messianic Jewish congregations preached against racism and for Arab-Jewish unity, Cantor said. The settlers provoking the violence are tied to a political movement he believes is rejected by the vast majority of Israelis.

But while most Arabs—who comprise a fifth of Israel’s population—and Jews get along, most Palestinian Christians do not believe in a unique divine role for Israel. And while Cantor understands—but rejects—their claim that Zionists stole their country, most Palestinians are at odds with what he says



is a clear baseline standard.

“It is important that people stick to their Bibles and not the news,” he said. “Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy.”

But this does not mean Messianic Jews are without fear. Discipling believers in the Israel Defense Forces, Eli Birnbaum protects them from hate and resentment.

“Growing up in Israel, you get used to the fact that there is a group of terrorists who will kill you if given the chance,” said the Jews for Jesus Israel ministry director, noting this is not true of Palestinians at large. “These rockets aren’t targeting the military; they are targeting my children.”

As such, Jews who believe in Jesus and who are frustrated with war have a recourse other than turning on political leaders or in anger toward enemies. Pastoring a small congregation in Tel Aviv, Birnbaum is preparing a sermon on 1 Samuel 30, in which David’s men wanted to stone him after the Amalekites burned Ziklag and took captive their wives and children.

“David turned that frustration toward prayer,” said Birnbaum. “And ultimately, Jesus gave his life on the cross so that we

can be strengthened in him no matter the circumstance we are in.”

But this does not take away the “disgust” most Messianic Jews have for Hamas and its disdain for both Jewish and Arab life, said David Friedman.

In contrast, in their fellowships Jewish and Arab believers are praying together—without blame.

“I am impressed with the sincerity of our unity,” said the Messianic Jewish Theological Institute professor and former dean of King of Kings College in Jerusalem.

“No matter what side of the political spectrum we may be on, the current rocket war is no breaking point.”

Similarly, David Katz, deputy general manager of Sar-El Tours which serves many evangelical clients, said he believes most Messianic Jewish congregations would justify Israel’s response to Hamas attacks on Israel. Many Messianic Jews live in Ashkelon and Ashdod, within range of the shortest-range missiles.

But they are also praying for Gaza, mourning the loss of life and longing for a lasting solution to the conflict.

Katz attended the solidarity rallies that followed the violence. Arabs and Jews in mixed neighborhoods came together to clean up their streets, repair damage, and raise money for the victims. In Jerusalem, they created a “peace chain.”

Solidarity, however, can go only so far.

“We extend love and prayers, but don’t go too deeply into the source of the conflict,” said Katz. “Now is not the time for that discussion.”

Lisa Loden, with much frustration, agrees. “At this stage, talking with those who hold different political views is useless,” said the

FULL STORY ON - 04

co-chair of the Lausanne Initiative for Reconciliation in Israel/Palestine (LIRIP).

“It is a time for intercession and lament. May the Lord have mercy on us all.”

Beginning in 2010 after a similar surge in Gazan missiles and deaths in 2009 strained ministry in the Holy Land, LIRIP sought to have honest but intense discussions about the different perspectives Messianic Jews and Palestinian evangelicals have toward the conflict.

A decade later, Loden sees this relationship nearer a breaking point rather than getting better. Though believers sing and pray in each other’s languages, “what was gained is at risk of being lost.”

Her LIRIP co-chair, Botrus Mansour, is a little more optimistic.

His recent interactions with Messianic Jews have encouraged further work toward reconciliation. As director of operations of Nazareth Baptist School, Mansour said joint programs with Jewish schools help promote the values of love and tolerance.

The same atmosphere is present at Hand in Hand School, a mixed bilingual public school in Jerusalem. Parents called frantically, said the principal, worried about the impact of clashes.

Looking outside her window, she saw the students playing soccer.

Other youth, however, are moving the wrong direction.

In February, Hebrew University polled over 1,000 students ages 16 to 18. Nearly half of the ultra-Orthodox and religious nationalist Jews said they “hated” Arabs, and favored stripping their citizenship.

Nearly one-quarter of secular Jews said the same.

Arab Israeli students polled at 22 percent hatred toward the religious Jews and 12 percent toward secular Jews. But in March, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found 37 percent of all ages favored armed resistance.

“The atmosphere is polluted with racism,” said Mansour. “It starts from leaders of Israel and goes down to the regular people.” He urges more examination of the root causes of the violence versus the current focus on the symptoms.

Shadia Qubti, co-producer of the Women Behind the Wall podcast, which uses storytelling to highlight the experience of female Palestinian Christians under occupation, said Palestinians have been suffering from years of political incitement and dehumanization.

“If you are tired of this repetitive news from

Israel and Palestine, I sympathize with you,” she said. “As your Palestinian brothers and sisters, we are weary of enduring it.”

The human rights organization Adalah—meaning justice in Arabic—counts 65 discriminatory laws in Israel, roughly half of which have been enacted since 2009.

For Loden, this is the main cause of the riots.

Arab Israelis face inequality and an unspoken second-class citizenship, she said. This was enshrined especially in the 2018 nation-state law that made primary the Jewishness of Israel.

“The pain, anger, and sense of betrayal in the Arab community has not been addressed,” Loden said. “It was buried.”

And Christian youth are growing frustrated with their churches, said Salim Munayer.

“Most evangelical churches have limited their message to ‘let us pray for peace,’ and some claim they don’t want to get involved in politics, sticking only to spiritual matters,” said the executive director of the Musalaha reconciliation ministry, based in Jerusalem. (He explains more on CT’s Quick to Listen podcast.)

“The silence is loud.”

Stuck in their own narratives, the youth turn to social media. There has been some interaction between communities, and Munayer has seen discussion of proper politics in view of the gospel message.

But on the ground in mixed cities, the reality does not facilitate reconciliation. The government, he said, has actively placed Zionist yeshiva students there to “Judaize” the neighborhoods.

Jack Sara, president of Bethlehem Bible College, said that the coexistence touted in mixed cities was never built on peace and justice, only pragmatism. Reconciliation cannot be built on unequal relationships.

For example, the government invests \$8,000 per year per Arab high school student in these areas, compared to \$13,000 per Jewish student.

Sara cited Sheikh Jarrah as an example of Judaizing efforts. Like the biblical Ahab and Jezebel, Jewish settlers found a “legal” way to steal land.

“Today, the Palestinians are calling for ‘Elijahs’ of the world to confront ‘Ahab’ for his crimes,” said Sara. “If so, maybe he will repent and return what he has stolen.”

But whereas Isaac called against calm in the face of injustice, Sara—equally resolute in an open letter as Middle East coordinator for the World Evangelical Alliance—appreciates joint efforts seeking to tone down the anger.

The Board of National Pastors and Elders in Israel released a statement.

“In light of the current situation ... [of] polarization and hatred between Arab and Jewish citizens, we Israeli Jews and Arabs, who share the same faith in Jesus as Messiah and Lord: declare that we are united in brotherly love,” they stated, expressing their agony. “With blessings and hope for quieter and better days.”

Arab churches have conducted online prayer gatherings asking God to protect both Arab and Jewish towns. Jewish congregations have asked God to intercede for both communities.

Jamie Cowen, a Messianic Jewish lawyer, said that in his congregation, the leader testified that God had changed his heart toward Arabs when he first became a believer. “For those I’m in touch with, there’s a sense that something needs to change in the country,” he said, “to heal the wounds and deal with the Palestinian issues.”

For Katz, active in the peace movement, this will not be easy.

Jewish settlement expansion in the West Bank has made a two-state solution nearly impossible. But a one-state solution will present demographic problems for the Jewish state, as all Palestinians under their control must be given passports and the right to vote.

“Reconciliation, equity, and respect between the sons of Abraham,” Katz said. “That’s a big call. But it’s what we need.”

And it will not happen, said Kopp, unless creative solutions can be found to address the core concerns of each group. God has a unique calling for both Jews and Palestinians.

But each must give up their treasured narratives in joint pursuit of the truth.

Hamas’s indiscriminate rocket fire should not be equated with Israel’s precision-seeking self-defense, he said. But neither should Israel’s flawed democracy be considered above reproach.

And until consensus is found, a soccer ball will help.

“It’s a mundane, Sisyphean effort of tiny strides,” Kopp ended his sermon to his congregation.

“But it’s the only way to reduce our striving for greatness, and end up the humble, peacemaking, and merciful children God wants to see in his kingdom.”

JAYSON CASPER
Christianity Today



Pastor Shibu Thomas
Oklahoma, USA

THE PROFIT AND THE EARNING SET APART FOR THE LORD!

The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him. (Proverbs 11: 1). God is interested and cares for the way we generate our income and the way how we transact it. Those who want to be rich in anyway do not seem to be heeding the commandments of the Lord. People do all sorts of deception in order to add houses and plots to their existing ones. The society has become the playground of cheating and betrayal. Bribery, a crucial peril, has been found infected among the people in the bureaucracy like Loranthus. Now unless we bribe the officers through the back doors, it seems that nothing will happen on time. This should be changed and then only our land and our people will become good. In commercial enterprises, people get cheated and looted in weight and quality. If we look at the eagerness of the man to become rich, we will feel that they plan to stay in this universe for hundreds of years. Solomon, the wise man, said, "As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them? The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no



Yet her profit and her earnings will be set apart for the LORD; they will not be stored up or hoarded. (Isaiah 23: 18)

sleep. Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands. All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger (Ecclesiastes 5: 10-20).

Earn money according to the will of God. Spend it in the day as per His will. Like we spend money for our own needs, we should spend for the work of the Lord in the world. May our earning and our spending be holy in the sight of the Lord.

Prayer – Lord, help me make money and spend it with a clean heart and a clean hand! Amen!

▶▶▶ **FULL STORY ON - 01**

from human contact with an infected animal or from a laboratory accident,” according to the president’s written statement.

Biden’s unusual public disclosure about private and inconclusive U.S. intelligence assessments revealed a debate raging within his administration over where the novel coronavirus originated.

It also lent credence to a theory that the virus may have emerged from a Chinese research laboratory instead of in nature.

China’s embassy in the United States said late on Thursday that politicizing the issue would hamper investigations into the origins of COVID-19.

China supports “a comprehensive study of all early cases of COVID-19 found worldwide and a thorough investigation into some secretive bases and biological laboratories all over the world,” the embassy said in remarks attributed to a spokesperson, posted on its website.

The pandemic has killed more than 3 million people worldwide and battered the global economy because of lockdowns and other restrictions to slow its spread.

The origin of the virus remains contested among experts.

The first known cases emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019.

In a report issued in March and written jointly with Chinese scientists, a World Health Organization-led team that spent four weeks in and around Wuhan in January and February said the virus had probably been transmitted from bats to humans through another

animal, and that “introduction through a laboratory incident was considered to be an extremely unlikely pathway.”

‘Specific questions for China’ Washington’s frustration has mounted in recent weeks over what it sees as insufficient cooperation from China into the international investigation.

“I have now asked the Intelligence Community to redouble their efforts to collect and analyze information that could bring us closer to a definitive conclusion, and to report back to me in 90 days,” Biden said.

“As part of that report, I have asked for areas of further inquiry that may be required, including specific questions for China.”

U.S. agencies have been pursuing COVID-19’s origins since the government first recognized the virus as a serious health risk in early 2020.

Earlier this week, U.S. government sources said a still-classified U.S. intelligence report circulated during former President Donald Trump’s administration alleged that three researchers at China’s Wuhan Institute of Virology became so ill in November 2019 that they sought hospital care.

The source of that early intelligence or how reliable U.S. agencies rate it is not known. It remains unclear whether the afflicted researchers were hospitalized or what their symptoms were, one of the sources said.

Intelligence committees of both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives are investigating how U.S. agencies have reported on and gathered information about COVID-19’s origin, how it spread and how governments have responded to it.

A report issued by House Intelligence Committee Republicans earlier this month focused particularly on the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

The Republican report asserted that “significant circumstantial evidence raises serious concerns that the COVID-19 outbreak may have been a leak” from the institute, suggested the Wuhan lab was involved in biological weapons research, and that Beijing had attempted to “cover up” the virus’ origins.

Washington has called for the WHO to open a second phase to its investigation on COVID-19’s origin. On Wednesday in Geneva, WHO emergency director Mike Ryan said the agency expected to provide an update on its proposed next steps “in the coming weeks.” China’s delegation to the WHO said on Tuesday it was calling on “all parties” to “adopt an open and transparent attitude” to cooperate with the WHO’s attempts to trace the virus’ origin.

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harvestingsoulsmission@gmail.com

Submissions Invited

FULL STORY ON - 01

Moha A.G. Agraz, a Tin-Akoff native, was quoted as saying.

The al-Qaeda and Islamic State terror groups have been launching attacks in West Africa since January, but no group has claimed responsibility for the latest attack.

Last May, 58 people, including children, were killed within 24 hours in three separate attacks in the provinces of Loroum, Komienga and Sanmatenga by armed Islamic militants who were targeting Christians, the U.K.-based aid agency Barnabus Fund reported at the time.

Burkina Faso, one of the most impoverished countries in the world, has been fighting armed groups with links to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State for about five years.

Since 2016, extremist groups including the Islamic State West Africa Province and Ansaroul Islam have carried out hundreds of attacks throughout the Sahel region of West Africa. But attacks increased in 2019 — deaths rose from 80 in 2016 to 1,800 in 2019. “Attacks on both Muslim and Christian houses of worship and religious leaders have spiked as jihadist and other militia groups expand their area of influence throughout the country,” the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom said in a report last year. “The government is struggling to rein in the violence, and poor performance and misconduct by government-affiliated forces are exacerbating the situation.”

“Analysts posit that the selection of religious targets, even by fighters with jihadist-affiliated armed groups, may not always be religiously motivated. Attacks against religious leaders and houses of worship resemble other attacks on local authorities and symbols of foreign influence, as these groups attempt to establish control over certain areas for political and economic gain,” the report added.

USCIRF explained that many jihadists fled to the border region of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, where they regrouped after the French defeat of insurgents and jihadists in northern Mali in 2012 and 2013. “Since 2016, both al-Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates have expanded their reach deep into the Burkinabe territory, aggravating other local tensions and triggering a security crisis.”

Jihadist violence has spread from the country’s north to the western Boucle du Mouhoun region where rice and maize are produced and transported to other areas, resulting in a food shortage and might cut off food for millions more in the region, The Associated Press reported earlier.

It is feared that the COVID-19 pandemic might exacerbate the situation at a time when 2 million people in the country are already facing food insecurity.

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shelters that will protect Israeli civilians from the attacks.

The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews [The Fellowship] placed 13 mobile bomb shelters in the heavily bombarded city of Ashkelon last Wednesday, along with several other mobile shelters throughout the week, to protect from Hamas terrorist missile fire.

The Fellowship also provided security staff in Ashkelon, a coastal southern Israel city, with 25 protective vests.

The Fellowship, a leading nonprofit founded in 1983 that bridges the gap between American evangelicals and Jews by providing humanitarian aid to Israel and Jewish people, has placed nearly 3,000 bomb shelters in Israel to date.

The support of American Christians who desire to see Israel protected has allowed thousands of permanent or mobile bomb shelters to “truly provide security and safety from these rocket attacks to the people of Israel.” “It’s mostly on behalf of Christians in America who want to provide that shelter and protection just as the Bible says to be the watchmen on the walls [of Jerusalem],” The Fellowship CEO Yael Eckstein, whose father founded the organization, told The Christian Post.

Despite the pandemic and subdued terror activity during 2020, The Fellowship continued to prepare for future conflicts in Israel and successfully placed 59 permanent and mobile bomb shelters and 1,000 protective vests in the past 18 months.

Factories can produce a mobile bomb shelter in six days, she said. And in times of conflict, these shelters can be purchased and placed in “key, strategic, vulnerable locations [under rocket fire].”

Especially in the last week, Israel is aware of the constant threat of attack from enemies surrounding the small Middle Eastern country of about 9 million people.

“Every night before we go to sleep and say the bedtime prayers to ask God to watch over us, we’re giving our plans for if there’s a [bomb] siren — who is going to grab who to go down to the shelters,” the mother of four shared.

“Things have definitely changed, and it’s a constant balance between making sure our children are aware and that you’re honest with them and that they’re aware of the threats and aware of where the closest bomb shelter is.”

She said it is challenging to find the balance of not being afraid and trusting in God’s protection while knowing individuals who have been killed in war and terror in Israel. “What’s really unique and unprecedented about this situation now is that we’re not

even technically in a situation of war and [there have] been more rockets over Tel Aviv, Jerusalem than ever before in the history of Israel,” Eckstein detailed.

“And so, I guess what makes this unique is just the range that Hamas terrorists are able to [reach]. The amount of people who are in their bomb shelters who have never [had] to get in their bomb shelters before and the ongoing barrages that are targeting civilians and not specifically military or IDF bases.”

The Fellowship has operated on the Gaza Strip for 15 years to prepare for emergencies through building bomb shelters, providing secure trauma centers and protective vests. But the attacks of the past couple of weeks have affected more Israeli civilians than ever before, according to Eckstein.

She said seeing the support millions of Christians have shown for Israel, despite the media’s often misleading narrative, is encouraging. “What’s inspiring to me personally is to see the millions of Christians who, despite the media totally misportraying what is happening, they see through it and continue to stand with Israel and be Israel’s most vocal supporters,” Eckstein said. “And for Christians, obviously, who stand for life, who stand against killing, who have these very, very strong values of freedom, to see how they recognize there’s one side defending themselves and one side waging war and targeting civilians, for me is just the most encouraging thing. ...” She said millions of Christians are going against the “mainstream opinion” because they understand that “Israel stands for freedom.”

Eckstein explained how Israel is surrounded by enemies that seek its destruction though it is peace-seeking and has never provoked a war in its history since 1948. “Israel yearns for peace,” she stated. “Israel does not want war. Israel doesn’t want to kill anyone. Israel wants to make sure that its citizens are safe. ...” Eckstein stated that while Israel is building bomb shelters to protect its civilians, the designated terrorist group Hamas uses women and children for shields and will build its weapons factories under schools and hospitals.

In reference to former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir’s quote, Eckstein said, “the day that our enemies love their children more than they hate us is the day there will be peace.” “[Israel] is really this beacon of light and Judeo-Christian values, just like America stands for with the same democratic process, same value for life and freedom,” she said. “And one of the hardest things is being surrounded by terrorists ... who have no value for life.” “If the Arabs would put down their arms, there would be no more war,” she continued. “If Israel would put down their arms, there would be no more Israel.”

FULL STORY ON - 02

example of showing an unbeliever what true discipleship costs, but this type of personal evangelism is rare today. Jesus was not interested in what has come to be known as “easy believism.” Some modern methods of personal evangelism are so mechanical that salvation is presented almost as a business arrangement: “Plug in this sinner’s prayer and surprise! Eternal life!” This presentation may result in many responses, but is that real salvation? Paul exemplified effective personal evangelism. After his radical conversion to Christ (Acts 9), Paul’s entire life changed. His new life motto was encapsulated in these words from Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Paul lived evangelism. Everything he did was for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). He sought ways to impart truth everywhere he went, in every cultural context (1 Corinthians 9:20–22). The other apostles practiced personal evangelism in the same way. At times, they gained massive responses, and churches were started on the spot (Acts 9:35, 42; 11:24). Other times, the first Christians were mocked, beaten, jailed, or run out of town (2 Corinthians 11:34–35; Acts 16:22–23). So even the best methods of personal evangelism won’t always produce converts.

Personal evangelism is the act of a person sharing the gospel with another. There are many different methods of personal evangelism, but Not every method is effective or biblically supportable; according to Bible Teacher Dr. John MacArthur, “Jesus would have failed personal

Sparkling Wisdom!

- ❖. If you are too busy to pray, you are busier than God wants you to be. – **Wanda E. Brunstetter**
- ❖. What you are is God's gift to you, what you become is your gift to God. – **Hans urs von Balthasar**
- ❖. Focus on giants – you stumble. Focus on God – Giants tumble. – **Max Lucado**
- ❖. We fear men so much, because we fear God so little. – **William Gurnall**
- ❖. We may have done what the devil said we did, but we are NOT who the devil says we are! – **April Cofield Essix**
- ❖. If you measure your life by what you own, the cavern of your heart will never be filled. – **James D. Maxon**
- ❖. Freedom is not doing what we want, but what we should. – **Victor Manuel Rivera**
- ❖. Jesus first, others next, and yourself last spells J-O-Y. – **Linda Byler**
- ❖. What the world neglects, the Lord accepts. – **Deborah Brodie**
- ❖. There is no greater reward in this life than having your family together, loving one another, and serving God. – **DrendaKeesee**



Abigail Thyvilayil John

'NOT SUITABLE FOR LIVING': GAZA'S CHRISTIAN POPULATION DWINDLES AMID HAMAS RULE, JOB STRUGGLES



As much global attention has been focused this month on Israel and Hamas, the violence may have caused Gaza's once-thriving Christian population to further dwindle as thousands of Christians in the region have fled poor economic conditions and discrimination over the last 15 years.

Many don't know that Gaza has its own Christian community, and the history of the presence of Christians in the Gaza Strip goes back to the beginnings of the Roman state's persecution of followers of the new religion. It was one of the areas Romans visited before the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity and the adoption of the Roman Empire's official religion at the beginning of the fourth century A.D.

Despite this authentic historical presence of Christians in this region, their numbers have gradually decreased, especially since 2006, after internal and external circumstances colluded. Since the takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, Christians and others have been subject to restrictions of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement. Today, estimates suggest that only about 1,000 Christians remain in the Gaza Strip.

Christians in the Gaza Strip today are divided into three sections. There are Christians from the original inhabitants of Gaza, who have inhabited it since ancient times, and others immigrated to it after Israel declared its independence in 1948. And the third group were those who were abroad and came in 1994 with the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and are still there today.

Khalil Hassan, 25 years old, is a Christian who has lived in the Gaza Strip since his birth. But he left the area four years ago, accompanied by his family. He went to the West

Bank in search of a better life, he says. "Since 2006, we have been suffering from both problems. We have not obtained a job opportunity due to the difficult economic conditions in Gaza, because of the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip, Fatah-Hamas conflict, as well as discrimination in The Gaza Strip, is between Muslims and Christians by the Islamists," he said in an interview with The Christian Post.

Earlier this month, the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip began firing missiles toward Israel after clashes between Jews and Arabs in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem. This led to an air response from Israel Defense Forces, which pummelled the Gaza Strip with airstrikes that have led to the displacement of thousands from their homes. A ceasefire was reportedly reached Friday.

The losers of this conflict are only the civilians who will be subjected to various types of abuse, especially in the Gaza Strip.

The Islamic Jihad Movement and Hamas both receive hundreds of millions of dollars in support from Qatar and Iran. The civilians in Gaza, including Christians, are persecuted in the Gaza Strip by the authorities of Hamas.

Why do Christians leave their lands?

Over the years, many Christians of Gaza have left their lands and migrated to other parts of the country and world. "With the beginning of each year, we expected conditions to improve and to live in dignity. But to no avail. So we were surprised by new crises that are more severe than the previous ones, such as the increase in unemployment rates, the lack of work opportunities and the continuous blackout," Hassan said.

As for the 46-year-old Christian resident of Gaza Abu George, who preferred not to reveal his full name, he dreams of leaving the Gaza Strip and heading to a European country to live away from the conditions of Gaza, which he described as "not suitable for living." "Since 2006, we have been facing

great difficulties," George added. "Our conditions are no longer the same, and there are some harassment by the Hamas government, in addition to the difficulty of moving to the West Bank at Christmas. So we did not enjoy freedom and comfort in the Gaza Strip; Therefore, immigration is our highest aspiration." "Our stay in Gaza is a duty for us because we come from this country," he added. "And despite that, we no longer tolerate more than that, and we tried to accept this reality, but to no avail. The situation in Gaza will not change and will worsen if the Palestinian reconciliation is not implemented. This is another reason makes me think of immigration to a European country, in search of freedom and a decent life."

Abu George explains that, at first, he rejected the idea of immigration. He said many of his friends and Christian relatives left several years ago. Although he wanted to stay in the Gaza Strip, when they told him about the difference between Gaza and life outside its borders, he reconsidered and became determined to immigrate.

Dangerous indications

A Greek Orthodox Church priest in Gaza, whose name is withheld to protect his identity, agrees that "the economic conditions in the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian conflict between Fatah and Hamas and the harassment by the Hamas government are the most important reasons that prompted Christians in the Gaza Strip to think about immigration."

"It was not suitable to live, so they wanted to search for a better life," He warned that the continuous migration of Christians from the Gaza Strip and their orientation to live in European countries and the West Bank "is a dangerous indicator that affects the Christian presence in the strip." "By immigration, which means that there will be no new generations of Christians in Gaza," he feared.

"Perhaps among the reasons that pushed Christians to leave the Gaza Strip is that holidays are limited to religious rituals in the church only and that public places and parks [have no celebrations], as was done in the past during the era of the Palestinian Authority before the Hamas-Fatah conflict. So the celebrations were spread all over the strip by that time and were lit Christmas trees and wandering the streets with big celebrations. But now the situation has changed."

TURKISH CHURCH ATTACKED, DESECRATED IN VILLAGE WHERE PRIEST'S PARENTS WERE KIDNAPPED

A Turkish church in the same village where the parents of a Catholic Chaldean priest were abducted last year has been attacked and desecrated, according to a report.

Unidentified people destroyed crosses, pictures of Jesus and rosaries at Marta Shimoni Church, a cave church in the mountainous village of Mehre in Turkey's southeastern Sýrnak province, last Tuesday, the U.S.-based persecution watchdog group International Christian Concern reported.

Video footage ICC obtained shows that the destruction was primarily against the Christian items and relics inside the church, ICC said. The group explained that the church is "built into the mountains, and thus cannot be destroyed in the same way as other churches."

Last January, suspected Kurdish militants kidnapped elderly Turkish Christians Hurmüz Diril and his wife, ʼimuni Diril, from the same village. On March 20, ʼimuni's son found her dead and dismembered in a river. Hurmüz's fate remains unknown, and the government has not found the killers.

The pair's son, Fr. Adday Ramzi Diril, serves as a Catholic priest, ministering to thousands of Iraqi refugees who live in Turkey.

A close relative of the Diril couple told ICC, "It is obvious that the people who did this are very uncomfortable with our presence on our lands and with our beliefs. This assault of our presence in the village is an indication that somebody is disturbed, and they do not want us here." The relative said the family suspects that the attack "was linked to the murder and disappearance of my parents."

The lawyer for the Diril family, Orhan Kemal Cengiz, also spoke to ICC about the attack on the church, saying the unsolved case of the Dirils might have emboldened the

attackers." My main concern, for the time being, is to get the prosecutor to open a case against the perpetrators in the abduction of the Diril couple, which ended with the murder of Mrs. Diril," the attorney was quoted as saying. "I have delivered more than a dozen petitions to the prosecutor so far,



to urge him to look at the matter from different angles, as well as calling him to deliver his indictment as soon as possible," he continued. "Unfortunately, I could not have any positive result yet. I believe there is a strong correlation between the lack of indictment in this case and the recent attack against the chapel in the village in which the Diril couple went missing. The prosecutor's refusal to introduce an indictment against the perpetrators emboldens the perpetrators and the people behind them," he added.

The lawyer believes there could be "links between this attack and the kidnapping of the Diril couple." He warned that if the impunity in the case of the abduction and killing of the Diril couple continues, "more attacks would follow."

The Sýrnak province borders both Iraq and Syria and Mehre is a historically Assyrian Christian village that has often been victimized by ongoing conflicts.

ICC had earlier said that the couple's abduction was carried out by PKK members, also known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party. Turkey considers the PKK to be a terrorist group.

The village was evacuated in 1989 and 1992 because of conflict between the PKK and the Turkish Army.

Turkey has a long history of Christian persecution, and its government still refuses to admit that the Ottoman Turks committed genocide of Christian Armenians in 1915.

Turkey is 99% Muslim, according to its own statistics. Although its constitution provides for freedom of religion, the government uses regulations that demand the registration of religious groups to make it more difficult to practice non-Islamic faiths. Hatred toward Christians and Jews in the country often leads to discrimination, stigmatization and attacks.

Last July, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan turned the Hagia Sophia, an ancient Christian cathedral, from a museum into a mosque, undoing its transformation in 1934 from a mosque to a cathedral.

You are cordially invited to send submissions to The End Time News magazine, including articles, short stories, poems, cartoons, etc. If you would like to contribute, please contact us at our email address :

harvestingsoulsmission@gmail.com



CHRISTIANS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE HOLY LAND: PALESTINIAN FOREIGN MINISTER RIYADH MALIKI



Rome - When you say that Palestine is the Holy Land, "you cannot talk about the Holy land without Christians", and Palestinian Authorities consider Palestinian Christians as an "integral, essential and solid part of the Palestinian people, it doesn't matter what the percentage of Christians is in Palestine", emphasizes Riyadh al Maliki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, enumerating in this regard also some institutional measures ordered by the Palestinian Authority with the aim of countering the progressive numerical erosion of the Christian component of Palestinian society. "We" - Minister al Maliki explains in an exclusive interview to Agenzia Fides "don't see Christians as a different community. They were in Palestine before the Muslims. Therefore if we talk about seniority, they have priority over Muslims in Palestine". The representative of the Palestinian government also traces the decision to increase the minimum quota of seats reserved for Christian citizens in the future Parliament of Palestine from 5 to 7 (out of a total of 132): "Christians", Al Maliki explains, "are a solid part of the Palestinian People. Even if they represent less than 7%, they should get minimum 7% in order to show that we want Christians who emigrated back. This is why it was decided that

they should be over-represented in the parliamentary assembly".

When you say that Palestine is the holy land, you cannot talk about the Holy land without Christians". In fact, in Palestinian society there have also recently been signs of intolerance towards Christians. In December the Palestinian Islamist Party Hamas had instructed Muslims to limit their "interaction" with Christian Christmas celebrations, in the Gaza Strip. "This

kind of approach" remarked categorically Minister al Maliki, "is something we do not accept because it is not part of our culture, tradition, our history ... and this is why so many religious and non-religious leaders have expressed dissent from that pronouncement in other parts of Palestine, and Hamas eventually withdrew it... What is important to us" adds the Minister "is what President Mahmud Abbas does. He is personally attends the Christmas midnight mass, he is a Muslim. What the President does, should reflect what Palestine should do. Our message is brotherhood, coexistence, we are the same family, one is Muslim and one is Christian. One cannot play with the composition of the Palestinian society. For us" continues the Palestinian Government Representative "Christianity is an essential component. That's why we have a presidential decree that the mayor of Bethlehem has to be always Christian the mayor of Ramallah has to be always Christian, and the same is for Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala ... it doesn't matter what the percentage of Christians in such cities, we want them to stay as Christians".

Minister al Maliki was able to speak on Thursday, May 6 with Archbishop Gallagher on the condition of Christians in Palestine and

throughout the Middle East, during a meeting with him at the Vatican. "With the Holy See" the Minister tells Fides "we want to stress the importance of our bilateral relations, to tell them about about the situation in Jerusalem, where there is an increased tendency to attack mosques and churches and to prevent both Muslims and Christians from having access to their holy places and participate in mass and prayers". He also touched other issues with Archbishop Gallagher al Maliki, including "this phenomena of evangelism spreading all over the world", a phenomena that "really should worry the Catholic Church but it worries us as Palestinians, because the evangelists are having anti- Palestinian tendency". Al Maliki's visit to Rome took place in the context of a European tour carried out by the Palestinian Minister to meet, among others, the Russian foreign Minister SergheiLaveov and the Italian foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio. The intent was to verify what European institutions and countries can do "in order to push Israel to allow us to hold elections in Jerusalem, not only in west bank and Gaza but also in Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Authority were forced to postpone the elections because Israel did not respond to their request to do it in Jerusalem. The foreign Ministers of the European Union are having a meeting on Monday "and we also want the countries to raise the issue in the meeting in order to collectively pressure Israel so it allows us to hold elections in Jerusalem". There have been no elections for 15 years, and some observers say Palestinian Authorities could find an alternative solution. "Jerusalem" Minister Maliki responds to these comment "is located in Jerusalem, it is not in Ramallah ... voting there means voting there. It is not a technical issue, it is connected with the issue of the status of Jerusalem, as a part of the occupied Palestinian territory. I have heard: why don't you hold elections in consulates, or in embassies or in UN offices ... or even in churches or mosques... but this" continues the Minister "is not acceptable. The whole issue of elections is about Jerusalem. To go towards elections without Jerusalem, it is like accepting what Trump said. Jerusalem is an eternal and undivided Capital of Israel. It's a political issue. It's not technical. We have postponed the elections for 15 years, we can do that more for 1, 2, 3 months but you can't give up on the Jerusalem issue". In the previous elections, the Minister recalls, Palestinian polling stations were also opened in East Jerusalem, because "there is an agreement signed in 1995 in Washington, and in that agreement Israel accepts that Palestinian carry out elections on all Palestinian territory including Jerusalem. Then, the Israelites heard what Trump told them, and now they say that if they allow the elections to take place in Jerusalem they are giving up that part of east Jerusalem to the Palestinians. The name is elections, but in reality the real issue is about Jerusalem".

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