

How Should We Respond to the Suffering in Israel & Gaza?

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Tragedy hit Israel on October 7th with the horrific massacres carried out by Hamas, leading to terrible deaths, injuries, grief and shock. Our hearts should go out to those affected, including the many held hostage in Gaza.

But the subsequent war is also tragic for Gazan civilians. It is heartbreaking to see what is happening to them. Our hearts should also go out to them, including those comprising the Christian community in Gaza.

Israel's right

Israel definitely has the right to attack Hamas and, hopefully, put it out of action. We must also remember that the devil wants to destroy Israel because God has a special purpose for her in the End Times. It is no surprise that Hamas, together with the Palestinian Authority, Hezbollah and Iran, want to see Israel completely annihilated. They are followers of a false god – Allah – and pay respect to a false Christ – Isa – who is not divine and did not die on the cross or rise from the dead.

We need to remember all this as we consider the current war, so that we are not misled. We should also remember that, a few months before the war, a poll found that around 57% of Gazans expressed at least a somewhat positive opinion of Hamas (together with 52% of Palestinians on the West Bank and 64% in East Jerusalem). This corresponded broadly with a similar poll conducted in 2021. (A more recent poll, carried out on 6 October – a day before the attack – put Gazans' support of Hamas considerably lower). Certainly, a large majority of Palestinians appear to support Hamas's weekend murder spree in Israel. All in all, a sizeable proportion of Gazan civilians are implicated.

However, support for Israel should not be uncritical, any more than love for one's neighbour should be uncritical. Is what Israel is doing in Gaza right? To attack Hamas is legitimate because, if the organisation remains in existence, it will attack Israel in the future, as it has done often in the past. It will cooperate with Hezbollah and Iran to seek her destruction. Iran is working hard to gain nuclear weapons and is on the brink of doing so.

Questioning the tactics

Yet, what about the terrible effects on the civilians of Gaza? I have no military knowledge, but I want to question some of Israel's tactics, bearing in mind that unjustified killing of civilians is a war crime.

- **Hamas has misappropriated aid** for the Gazan people in the past and they would no doubt do so now. But isn't risking that happening to some extent much better than causing the Gazan civilians to have a very serious lack of food, water and medical supplies?
- **Hamas has stored away much fuel** to use it in their attacks on Israel and they could seek to misappropriate any fuel brought in to the Gazan civilians. But isn't risking that happening to some extent much better than depriving the civilians of essential fuel?
- **Attacks on Hamas are legitimate**, and the organisation deliberately uses civilians as shields, having their centres in or near hospitals, schools, etc. But is it legitimate for Israel to continue bombing such centres, which causes extensive civilian casualties, as opposed to a ground offensive by troops which, albeit more dangerous to Israeli troops, is likely to be more precise in hitting Hamas rather than civilians?
- **Israel has long claimed that Hamas** has bases in or near hospitals (and it has been recently revealed that its main headquarters are directly underneath Gaza's largest hospital - the Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City). But how can it be justified for Israel to require this or any other hospital to evacuate all its patients, including those who probably wouldn't survive such an evacuation? Surely a different approach is required.

As I said, I have no military knowledge, and there may be factors I don't know about which complicate Israel's tactics. But we can't just sit back and fail to ask these questions. I believe that, given the terrible suffering of the Gazan people, Israel owes it to the world (especially those who support her) to change tactics or to answer the above questions clearly and in some detail. What I have heard from Israelis so far are generalisations which don't answer the questions.

Gift to anti-Israel propaganda

One important issue is that very bad PR is being spread about Israel. Of course, Hamas can't be trusted to tell the truth about the number of casualties (or, indeed, about anything else). Also, Israel is not stupid. It would seek to avoid, where possible, actions which could stir up strong criticism.

That is the main reason why, from the start, I didn't believe Israel was responsible for the explosion at the Al-Ahli hospital. To deliberately attack an overcrowded hospital in this way would not only be very cruel, but would be one of the most stupid and pointless 'own goals' in military history. Subsequently, it has been proved that this was caused by a misfired Hamas rocket.

However, sadly, the tactics Israel are using against Gaza are acting as a gift to anti-Israel propaganda. They also raise the question about what Israel is aiming to achieve. Is it purely to remove Hamas for once and for all, as it claims (and is that even achievable without another equally heinous terrorist outfit rising from the ashes)? Or is its aim to destroy Gaza, or, as some have suggested – to divide it in two?

Determining the rights and wrongs of the Israel-Palestinian division is no easy matter. The whole scenario is steeped in complexities. What, for example, are we to make of the awkward reality that, for years, Netanyahu actually propped up Hamas in attempt to stop the Palestinian Authority's West Bank government from advancing toward the establishment of a Palestinian state? In the process, Hamas was upgraded from a terror group to an organization with which Israel held indirect negotiations via Egypt, and one that was allowed to receive infusions of cash from abroad.

Furthering God's purpose

We also need to recognize the relevant prophetic issues. The war with Gaza puts Israel at great risk. It could all too quickly lead to a regional war between Islamic states and Israel. That could greatly endanger Israel. The New Testament indicates that the re-establishment of Israel is a sign of the End Times ([Luke 21:24, 29ff](#)). Also, Paul makes it clear that there will be a massive turning of Jewish people to Christ in the End Times ([Rom 11:11-27](#)).

The devil is trying to destroy Israel and prevent God's purposes being fulfilled. This is the real issue behind the Israel-Hamas war. The most notable outcome of the conflict so far appears to be the inflaming of antisemitism globally – this in spite of the fact that the war's origins comprised a mini-holocaust that rocked the world on October 7th ; the bloodiest day in Israel's history. Yet, people are taking to the streets in their thousands to express anti-Israel sentiments, many of them conveying overtly antisemitic slogans.

This isn't only a matter of the present suffering of Israelis and Gazans – terrible though that is – or of Israel's war tactics. It is about Israel's very survival and the fulfilment of God's End Time purposes for the Jewish people. If we are unwise in our reactions – being uncritically pro-Israel or strongly anti-Israel - we will only be furthering the devil's purpose.

Prayer points

We need to pray:

- For the fulfilment of God's intention that "*all Israel will be saved*" and used for His purposes in the End Times.
- For the protection of Israel from further military attack.
- For the protection of Israel from hateful antisemitism, including in political circles.
- For Israel to use only legal tactics in the war.
- For the protection of innocent Gazan civilians.
- For the safe liberation of Israeli hostages.
- For the healing of those suffering because of the war – on both sides.
- For the destruction of Hamas.
- For the war to end soon.