

Prayer for peace between Israel and Hamas urged

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Deadly conflict raging between Israel and Hamas sparked calls to prayer and appeals for peace—and in some cases finger-pointing—from Baptists.

A message from the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel, posted May 16 on the [European Baptist Federation's Facebook page](#), expressed concern not only about casualties from bomb blasts and rockets, but also regarding civil unrest within their nation.

“What is happening inside Israel is very alarming,” the message from Bader Mansour, development officer with the association, stated. Mansour noted “rioting and looting” involving both Jews and Arabs.

“Many innocent people have been attacked and beaten, and [a] few people were killed. Businesses and homes were burnt down or vandalized, and extremists are trying to terrorize innocent people who do not feel safe even inside their own homes. The situation continues to be dangerous,” Mansour stated.

“In addition to the loss of lives and in property, we are mostly concerned about the spread of hatred and the destroying of co-existence that was built with lots of hard work. After all, this will stop, [but] it will take years to build what was destroyed.”

The association called its churches to three days of fasting and prayer for their nation and asked other concerned Christians to join in prayer.

Baptists in Israel specifically requested prayer:

- “For the peace of Jerusalem, including all its inhabitants and all surrounding areas—for both Israelis and Palestinians.”
- “For leaders and all those in authority that they may pursue peace so we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”
- “For the healing of relationships between Jews and Arabs, especially for our young people who are exposed to this kind of hatred for the first time.”
- “For protection for our churches, communities and for our families. Some churches had to cancel their services or hold them online because of fear. Pray especially for Haifa, Acre, Lod, Ramle, Jaffa, Cana of Galilee, Turaan.”
- “For us to remember to turn our eyes to God, our refuge and strength, and to Jesus, the prince of peace.”
- “For us to live our faith by loving our neighbors as ourselves and have faith to continue being a prophetic voice amid the chaos and light amid the darkness.”

According to its [website](#), the Nazareth-based Association of Baptist Churches in Israel includes 17 churches with a total membership of about 3,000, mostly among the Christian Arab population in the north part of the country. The association is a member organization of the Baptist World Alliance.

BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown confirmed the presence of “Baptists within both Israel and the Palestinian territories who are being directly impacted and who need our prayers.”

TBM mobile field kitchens used in Israel

Some people in Israel who have lost their homes due to bomb blasts are receiving meals at field kitchens [Texas Baptist Men](#) provided to Israel's [Emergency Volunteer Project](#).



Personnel with the Israeli Defense Force's Home Front Command teach Texas Baptist Men volunteers the basics of how to remove an injured person who is trapped by rubble. (Photo / Ken Camp)

TBM established a [partnership with EVP](#) in 2018 to provide the Israeli group with disaster relief equipment and train volunteers how to provide large-scale emergency food service.

Mickey Lenamon, executive director and CEO of TBM, offered a report on conditions in Israel and a call to prayer in a May 14 email to TBM supporters.

“In the midst of the conflict, our partners in Israel are using TBM mobile kitchens to meet the needs of people of all kinds who have lost their homes. In some cases, volunteers are feeding between runs to bomb shelters,”

Lenamon wrote.

“Please pray for their efforts and their safety in this difficult and life-threatening effort. Pray God be glorified in all they do.

“Please pray for Israel. This situation is serious and has many ramifications around the world. Pray for those who are being impacted by the conflict, as well as those who are caught in the middle of it. Pray for a movement of God throughout the region.”

Varied perspectives on cause of conflict

In his May 13 edition of “[The Daily Article](#),” cultural observer Jim Denison, founder of the Denison Forum, wrote about what he views as the historical and theological backstory to the conflict between Hamas and Israel.



An Israeli artillery unit fires toward targets in the Gaza Strip, at the Israeli Gaza border, Monday, May 17, 2021. (AP Photo/Heidi Levine)

“Iran is supporting Hamas with the materials it needs to wage war on Israel because Iranian leaders believe that attacking Israel and otherwise

provoking global chaos is an essential step to the return of the Mahdi, their Messiah,” wrote Denison, who has served as theologian-in-residence with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

“As Shiites, they are also opposed to Israel’s recent peace initiative with Sunni Muslim nations and want to prevent the formation of a united Sunni front against Iranian expansion,” Denison continued. “And Hamas’ leaders are waging war against Israel because such conflict legitimizes their political position and distracts from their misgovernance of Gaza.

“For their part, some in Israel support the removal of six Palestinian families from East Jerusalem (one of the issues sparking the current conflict) because they oppose a two-state solution and want to reclaim the biblical land of Israel.”



Palestinian rescue workers carry the remains of a man found next to a beachside cafe after it was hit by an Israeli airstrike, in Gaza City, Monday, May 17, 2021. (AP Photo/Khalil Hamra)

While some point to deaths caused by both Israel and Hamas, the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America lays blame for the conflict solely upon Israel.

“What’s happening in Israel/Palestine is not a ‘both sides’ situation. These are not ‘clashes.’ Israel is an apartheid state, and Palestinians live under occupation,” a [May 13 statement](#) on the fellowship’s website reads.

The article titled “What you can do to support Palestine” includes links to petitions, a statement by the [United Church of Christ](#) and information about the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement.

Johnnie Moore, president of the Congress of Christian Leaders, offered a contrasting position, pledging the prayers and support of U.S. evangelicals for Israel.

“Evangelicals pressed pause on their lives to defend the State of Israel and the Jewish people against Hamas terrorists and their Iranian backers,” Moore told the [Jerusalem Post](#) last week. “Our community pushed back online in response to the disinformation coming from the terrorists, reached out to politicians obsessively, and this weekend tens of millions will pray for Israel in their churches.”

Steering clear of any political statement and making no direct mention of Israel or Hamas, Pastor Bob Roberts of Northwood Church in Keller offered a simple message on Twitter.

Roberts, who has ministered in Arab countries and promoted interfaith dialogue with Muslims globally and locally, [tweeted](#): “Following Jesus—the Prince of Peace—means his followers, always and everywhere, ought to be peacemakers!”