

Commentary: Arab-Evangelical response to Palestinian-Israeli conflict

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The enduring conflict between Israel and Hamas once again has ignited a powder keg of historical tensions beginning to explode in the tumultuous Middle East.

The situation has reached a critical juncture, with a significant loss of life, as evident from the mounting death toll, which tragically includes more than 1,200 Israelis and 1,500 Hamas fighters at the time of writing.

While the geopolitical complexities and long-standing historical grievances underlying this conflict have been documented meticulously, this article takes a unique perspective. It delves into the response of Arab Evangelicals to the ongoing atrocities.

In doing so, this article seeks to provide insight into the role and convictions of this particular group in the midst of the turmoil, shedding light on their perspective in a complex and highly sensitive context.

In 1978, Hamas—an acronym for *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya* (the “Islamic Resistance Movement”)—was established by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in conjunction with the Muslim Brotherhood movement.

Since its inception, and despite the fact many Arab countries have established peace treaties with Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian groups assumed the responsibility of confronting Israel until the establishment of Palestinian sovereignty across the entire country.

In the early stages of this conflict, Arab Christians found themselves at the heart of the turmoil. Some took up arms against Israel, while many opted for different paths. However, today, in the midst of the raging war, Arab Christians in general, and Arab Evangelicals in particular, bear witness to the depth of pain and suffering endured by both parties.

The death toll on either side continues to mount, families are torn apart, and children are left orphaned. To many observers, it seems as if the sanctity of human life has been overshadowed, and individuals have become reduced to mere numbers.

Created in God's image

As Arab Evangelicals, it is impossible not to recall the words of God in Genesis 1:26: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'" (LSB).

The phrase "image of God" does not imply a physical resemblance to God, as God is a spirit (John 4:24). Instead, it signifies a more profound concept that underscores the dignity and worth inherent in every human being due to their creation by God.

This concept encapsulates the unique relationship between God and humanity, entrusting humans with the responsibility to exercise dominion and stewardship over creation.

The renowned Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck articulated this in *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation* when he noted:

"The essence of human nature is its being [created in] the image of God. The entire world is a revelation of God, a mirror of his attributes and perfections. ... But among creatures, only man is the image of God, God's highest and richest self-revelation and consequently the head and crown of

the whole creation, the *imago Dei* and the epitome of nature” (p. 530-31).

Hence, the response of Arab Evangelicals to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is firmly grounded in the Bible-based belief in the sanctity of human life. This principle is deeply embedded in Christian doctrine and transcends the political divisions and ethnic animosities that long have characterized the region.

Arab Evangelicals maintain a resolute commitment to the intrinsic value of every individual, regardless of nationality or ethnicity. In the midst of violence and suffering, their message resounds clearly: Human life is sacred.

Witnessing the tragic loss of life—be it infants or adults and irrespective of their skin color, language or nationality—is a heart-wrenching experience. God created humanity with dignity. However, sin not only separated us from God and rendered us spiritually lifeless, but it also induced us to vilify one another and cease recognizing each other as bearers of God’s image.

Dependence on prayer

Growing up in a region steeped in more than half a century of war and conflict has, unfortunately, led many, including myself, to become accustomed to the proximity of war. While this is a somber reality, it also has taught me and countless others that our ability to change our reality is profoundly limited.

This inability to alter our circumstances has bred a profound sense of dependence on God to intervene. It has transformed the words of Proverbs 3:5-6 into a lived reality.

For this reason, Evangelicals in the Middle East understand and believe prayer is not solely a means of communication with God, but it is a potent

instrument for change. In the midst of the intricate geopolitical landscape, Arab Evangelicals turn to prayer as a wellspring of hope, guidance and transformation.

At the heart of our prayers as Arab Evangelicals, we express a profound and unwavering longing for more than just an end to the ongoing conflict and suffering in the region. Our prayers extend beyond the immediate cessation of hostilities to encompass a broader and more enduring aspiration that both Israelis and Palestinians may come to embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior.

This profound desire demonstrates a belief that transcends national and political boundaries, reflecting a deep conviction that genuine spiritual transformation is the foundational element for achieving lasting peace.

The recognition that political solutions, although essential, may not be adequate to address the deep-seated wounds and grievances deeply entrenched in the region is central to this perspective.

True peace

As Arab Evangelicals we understand the issues at the core of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are multifaceted and encompass historical, religious and socio-political dimensions. We firmly believe true and lasting peace will fully materialize only when the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) returns.

In essence, this perspective emphasizes that while political agreements and negotiations can mitigate immediate tensions, the true path to lasting peace lies in the spiritual transformation of individuals and communities, paving the way for a future where both Israelis and Palestinians can coexist harmoniously.

In a region marked by religious, ethnic and political divisions, the words of His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, a prominent [advocate for peace in the Middle East](#), resonate: “Let us have ambitions. Ambitions to move beyond the violence and occupation, to the day when two states, Palestine and Israel, can live together, side by side, in peace and security.”

Today, our prayers as Arab Evangelicals encompass two vital aspects—praying for an end to the war and for the spread of the gospel.

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