



Gaza Today Has Become the Moral Compass of the World

Dec. 25—Read below excerpts of the searing sermon delivered on Dec. 23, 2023 by the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem. Dr. Isaac, a Palestinian Christian pastor and theologian, designed and placed a now-famous creche of Christ in the Rubble in his church, and was part of a delegation of religious leaders from Bethlehem who visited Washington, D.C. in late November carrying an open letter to President Biden and U.S. congressmen demanding: “We want a constant and comprehensive ceasefire. Enough death. Enough destruction.”

To know what you and others can do to stop this ongoing crime against Humanity, and not be complicit with it, re-read Helga Zepp-LaRouche’s Christmas message, Turn Swords Into Plowshares! and the Schiller Institute’s exposé The Military-Financial Complex Is Bloated on Blood Money from Wars.

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Christ in the Rubble: A Liturgy of Lament

We are angry...

We are broken...

This should have been a time of joy; instead, we are mourning. We are fearful. 20,000 killed. Thousands under the rubble still. Close to 9,000 children killed in the most brutal ways. Day after day after day. 1.9 million displaced! Hundreds of thousands of homes were destroyed. Gaza as we know it no longer exists. This is an annihilation. A genocide.

The world is watching; Churches are watching. Gazans are sending live images of their own

execution. Maybe the world cares? But it goes on....

We are asking, could this be our fate in Bethlehem? In Ramallah? In Jenin? Is this our destiny too?

We are tormented by the silence of the world. Leaders of the so-called “free” lined up one after the other to give the green light for this genocide against a captive population. They gave the cover. Not only did they make sure to pay the bill in advance, they veiled the truth and context, providing political cover. And, yet another layer has been added: the theological cover with the Western Church stepping into the spotlight....

In our terminology in Palestine, we speak of the Empire. Here we confront the theology of the Empire. A disguise for superiority, supremacy, “chosenness,” and entitlement. It is sometimes given a nice cover using words like mission and evangelism, fulfillment of prophecy, and spreading freedom and liberty. The theology of the Empire becomes a powerful tool to mask oppression under the cloak of divine sanction. It divides people into “us” and “them.” It dehumanizes and demonizes. It speaks of land without people even when they know the land has people—and not just any people. It calls for emptying Gaza, just like it called the ethnic cleansing in 1948 “a divine miracle.” It calls for us Palestinians to go to Egypt, maybe Jordan, or why not just the sea?...

This war has confirmed to us that the world does not see us as equal. Maybe it is the color of our skin. Maybe it is because we are on the wrong side of the political equation. Even our kinship in Christ did not shield us. As they said, if it takes killing 100 Palestinians to get a single “ Hamas militant ” then so be it! We are not humans in their eyes. (But in God’s eyes... no one can tell us we are not!)

The hypocrisy and racism of the Western world is transparent and appalling! They always

take the words of Palestinians with suspicion and qualification. No, we are not treated equally. Yet, the other side, despite a clear track record of misinformation, is almost always deemed infallible!

To our European friends. I never ever want to hear you lecture us on Human rights or international law again. We are not white—it does not apply to us according to your own logic....

In the shadow of the Empire, they turned the colonizer into the victim, and the colonized into the aggressor. Have we forgotten that the state was built on the ruins of the towns and villages of those very same Gazans?

We are outraged by the complicity of the church. Let it be clear: Silence is complicity, and empty calls for peace without a ceasefire and end to occupation, and the shallow words of empathy without direct action—are all under the banner of complicity. So here is my message: Gaza today has become the moral compass of the world. Gaza was hell on earth before October 7th.

If you are not appalled by what is happening; if you are not shaken to your core—there is something wrong with your humanity. If we, as Christians, are not outraged by this genocide, by the weaponizing of the Bible to justify it, there is something wrong with our Christian witness, and compromising the credibility of the Gospel!

If you fail to call this a genocide. It is on you. It is a sin and a darkness you willingly embrace.

Some have not even called for a ceasefire....

I feel sorry for you. We will be ok. Despite the immense blow we have endured, we will recover.

We will rise and stand up again from the midst of destruction, as we have always done as Palestinians, although this is by far the biggest blow we have received in a long time.

But again, for those who are complicit, I feel sorry for you. Will you ever recover from this?

Your charity, your words of shock AFTER the genocide, won't make a difference. Words of regret will not suffice for you. We will not accept your apology after the genocide. What has been done, has been done. I want you to look at the mirror... and ask: where was I?...

In Gaza today, God is under the rubble. And in this Christmas season, as we search for Jesus, he is to be found not on the side of Rome, but our side of the wall. In a cave, with a simple family. Vulnerable. Barely, and miraculously surviving a massacre. Among a refugee family. This is where Jesus is found.

If Jesus were to be born today, he would be born under the rubble in Gaza.

When we glorify pride and richness, Jesus is under the rubble.

When we rely on power, might, and weapons, Jesus is under the rubble.

When we justify, rationalize, and theologize the bombing of children, Jesus is under the rubble....

This manger is our message to the world today—and it is simply this: this genocide must stop NOW. Let us repeat to the world: STOP this Genocide NOW.

This is our call. This is our plea. This is our prayer. Hear oh God. Amen.

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