

What about Myanmar?

Our friends within Presbyterianism commonly ask us why we care so much about Gaza. There are other bad things happening in the world. We are told there is a genocide happening in Myanmar, and perhaps other places.

It is a good question. It deserves an answer.

A Logical Response

In the case of Myanmar, it is not clear at all that either the UK or Ireland can have a major influence on events in that part of the world, but neither have been neutral or silent. In fact, on 15th November 2023, the UK joined five partner countries in filing a genocide complaint against Myanmar at the ICJ, while at the same criticising the ICJ for pursuing the much more severe genocide case of Gaza.

For us it is not just because the UK asks the ICJ to label one as a genocide but denies the other in the face of overwhelming evidence. Gaza is vastly different in scale, in brutality and it has the added elements of apartheid and racial supremacy. Most relevantly to us it is different because of the extraordinary support offered to the perpetrator by our own governments, and the extraordinary willingness of our leaders across civic society to look the other way. In that respect our democratic responsibilities as citizens come to the fore.

Ireland:

1. Facilitates the sale of bonds for the Israeli government.
2. Has allowed hundreds of US planes to stop off in Shannon Airport carrying bombs to be used on the people of Gaza.
3. Has recently signed up to the IHRA definition of anti-semitism, which conflates criticism of Israel with hatred of Jews.

The UK:

1. Operates RAF spy flights over Gaza on an almost daily basis, sending footage to the Israeli security forces.
2. Supplies large quantities of arms to Israel. Between October and December 2024 it approved £127.6 million of military equipment sales to Israel, including 150,000 bullets.
3. Supplies 15% of the critical components in F35 bombers, which are used to blow Gazan civilians to pieces in IDF bombings.

A Spiritual Response

We don't really understand this idea of referencing other parts of the world as a way of diverting attention from an area where we have huge influence and involvement and where crimes against humanity are clearly being committed.

Well, we kind of understand it at a human level, but not in Biblical or moral terms. With examples of morality that are part of our framework as Christians, we can find examples in the Bible to back us up if we are in doubt. If we want to understand love, generosity, kindness, courage, steadfastness, fairness, self-control; we'll always find a Biblical basis, and usually many, which will reassure us that these are virtues.

The trouble is, we can't find anything at all in the Bible to support moral relativism. Rather the Bible teaches that when we sin, we fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), and we become separated from God. Sin, like salvation, is not a matter of degree.

In Matthew 5:27, 28, Jesus said *"You have heard it was said, 'you shall not commit adultery'. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart"*

Christ taught us that sin matters, and it matters absolutely in the moment, so pointing the finger elsewhere does not in any way take away our responsibility to do what we can do that is right in the eyes of God.

Just as it makes no sense to us to say that it may be OK to rape someone because lots of people get raped, it equally makes no sense to say that it's OK to turn a blind eye to a genocide where our democratic governments could make it stop because there could be other genocides happening in different parts of the world where our governments have much less influence.

This is why we have no choice but to raise the alarm on Gaza.

Books

Blood Brothers - The dramatic story of a Palestinian Christian working for peace in Israel.

Elias Chacour, David Hazard

Christ in the Rubble – faith, the Bible and genocide in Gaza.

Rev Dr Munther Isaac

Genocide in Gaza – Israel, Hamas and the long war on Palestine.

Prof Avi Shlaim, Oxford University

We are Not Numbers – the voices of Gaza's youth.

Ahmed Alnouaq and Pam Bailey

The Hundred Years War on Palestine

Rashid Khalidi

Media

Novara Media <https://novaramedia.com/>

(London-based independent media channel)

Owen Jones <https://www.youtube.com/@OwenJonesTalks>

(Guardian journalist with his own channel)

Double Down News <https://doubledown.news/watch>

(UK video channel with a lot of content which focuses on Israel/Palestine)

Electronic Intifada <https://electronicintifada.net/tags/7-october>

(American media publication which has done a lot of in-depth investigative reporting on the events of Oct 7th, 2023)

Declassified UK <https://www.declassifieduk.org/> +

<https://www.youtube.com/@DeclassifiedUK>

(UK publication and Youtube channel focusing on British foreign policy)

Christ at the Checkpoint <https://christatthecheckpoint.bethbc.edu/>

(By Bethlehem Bible College, raising awareness of the Palestinian Christian experience)

Palestine Deep Dive <https://palestinedeepdive.com>

(Independent, Palestinian-led media, London based)