

By Gary Taphorn

Editor's Note: This article provides an updated analysis of Israel's war on Gaza; it follows a previous piece in the July 2024 [edition of CFN](#), entitled "*War in Gaza: An Assessment after Months of Conflict*." That article and others by the same author on Israel and Christian Zionism can be accessed at <https://catholicfamilynews.com/blog/author/garytaphorn/>

THE CRISIS CONTINUES

As of December 2024, Israel continues to face the most existential moment in its history with its society seemingly on a permanent war footing. Meanwhile, Palestinian society, especially in Gaza, is near collapse. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has been in combat against one or more adversaries for some fourteen months with no end in sight. In typical overdramatization, Prime Minister Netanyahu's government has begun to claim that it is fighting a war on seven fronts — Iran, Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, and groups in Syria, Iraq, and the West Bank.^[1] Such language helps to cultivate more political sympathy and foreign aid from the West, especially the United States. In reality, Israel is *choosing* to fight on most of those fronts and can easily defeat any opponent except Iran at a time of its choosing, so long as only lip-service is paid to international law and human rights.

Gaza remains the key front, where Israel has reduced conditions nearly to the Stone Age. The official IDF objective is to destroy Hamas and obtain return of its hostages. The real intention, however, is to make life unlivable for the wretched Palestinians who remain in Gaza, where the United Nations has called conditions "unfit for human survival."^[2]

Meanwhile, the aggressive Israeli settlers on the West Bank have increased their harassment of Palestinians, abetted by the Israeli government. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (<https://www.ochaopt.org/>) publishes weekly updates on both Gaza and the West Bank, which are heartbreaking to read. A recent weekly update on the West Bank notes, for example, that "69 Palestinians were injured by Israeli settlers, 13 by Israeli forces, and more than 1,600 mostly olive trees burnt, sawed-off or otherwise vandalized, and many crops and harvesting tools stolen..."^[3] A recent update for Gaza states that "for almost a month, all attempts by humanitarian organizations to deliver food to people in the besieged areas of North Gaza governorate have been blocked by the Israeli authorities...Health-care conditions in North Gaza remain critical with the Kamal Adwan Hospital hit twice in the past week and the delivery of life-saving supplies to the Al Awda Hospital denied."^[4] The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), a tool maintained by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), announced in November that "a Famine scenario is unfolding amid the near-total blockade of food supply flows into North Gaza governorate...In the rest of Gaza, the risk of Famine remains very credible amid restricted food supply flows."^[5] How is it possible for famine,

which we typically associate with Africa or south Asia, to exist within an hour's drive of the luxury neighborhoods of Tel Aviv or West Jerusalem? Such is the rotten fruit of [Zionism](#).



Fire and smoke rise following an Israeli airstrike, in Gaza City, Sunday, Oct. 8, 2023.

Fatima Shbair/[AP](#)

On the Lebanon front, Hizballah began firing its rockets into northern Israel out of solidarity with Hamas one day after its surprise attack on Israel in October 2023. The IDF responded with overwhelming air strikes, which were supplemented by a ground incursion into Lebanon in October 2024. Since the start of fighting, more than 2500 persons in Lebanon and more than 70 persons in Israel have reportedly been killed.^[6] It represents Israel's fourth invasion of Lebanon's sovereign territory since 1978, including an 18-year occupation from 1982-2000. Israel's tactics in Lebanon pushed the laws of warfare to a new and questionable limit in September when it coordinated a remote detonation of pager devices. The simultaneous explosions around the country caused the deaths of at least twelve persons, including two children, and the injury of thousands more.^[7] Four days later, "Israeli warplanes [dropped](#) over 80 U.S.-made, 2,000-pound bombs on six high-rise apartment buildings in Beirut, leveling the residences."^[8] As intended, the raid killed

Hassan Nasrallah, longtime leader of the militant Lebanese group Hizballah. The collateral damage included 33 other fatalities and almost 200 injured.[\[9\]](#) The IDF airstrikes have continued without pause, causing a Catholic archdiocese in eastern Lebanon to report a major humanitarian disaster. Although woefully short of resources, the archdiocese and its Christian families have been aiding thousands of displaced persons in an act of solidarity deeply appreciated by Muslim neighbors.[\[10\]](#)

With the U.S. effectively running interference for Israel in the United Nations, there is no international entity with the will and credibility to stop the ongoing slaughter. In September, Pope Francis implied that Israel's actions in Gaza and Lebanon have been immoral and disproportionate.[\[11\]](#) Like most of the pope's other proclamations, this was met with an international yawn. Finally, as Christians turn their thoughts to Bethlehem, journalists are reporting nothing but discouraging news from that West Bank town. Not only are no tourists expected again this Christmas season, but more Arab residents – both Christian and Muslim – are seeking opportunities to emigrate.[\[12\]](#)

THE BIDEN RECORD - PASSIVE AND INEPT

As Joe Biden's term of office comes to an end, most Americans will rightly consider him an abject failure. Among other issues, they will cite America's open borders and illegal immigration, rampant crime, raging inflation, and global instability, in addition to Biden family corruption. What will be missing from most of the postscripts on the Biden Administration is that the president tolerated and even abetted Israel's actions in Gaza. In short, according to Amnesty International and others, Joe Biden's legacy includes cooperation with genocide.[\[13\]](#)

Biden has spent his entire federal career following the path of least resistance. In the case of Middle East policy, that meant "standing with Israel." Although the Hamas attack in October 2023 may have been a surprise to Israel, the fact that it would eventually happen was not, as I noted in July.[\[14\]](#) The conditions have been so dire in Gaza ("the world's largest open-air prison") for so long that rebellion had to be expected. Biden's actions focused on largely rubber-stamping whatever was requested (often demanded) by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Biden delivered. In fairness, he was not helped by his clueless vice president, Kamala Harris, whose sympathies apparently lay with the Palestinians but who did not have either the spine or the coherency to state her case.



A Palestinian girl carries a child through the rubble of houses destroyed by Israeli bombardment in Gaza City on March 3, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Hamas movement.

AFP/via Getty Images

Worse was the performance of Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. Among other failures, Blinken disregarded the findings of his own staff (and USAID) in September that the Israeli government was deliberately blocking the delivery of food and medicine to Gaza.[\[15\]](#) Had he endorsed their conclusions, it would have triggered a U.S. law halting arms transfers to Israel.[\[16\]](#) As noted by *The New Republic*, “When the history of the Israeli war on Gaza is written, there will be no shortage of words dedicated to American villains in this story, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken will be near the top of this list. Blinken...had an opportunity to alter the course of this war, save countless lives, and do so merely by following US law. But he chose to skirt the law and to deceive Congress and the American public, all to ensure bombs continued to flow to Israel as massacre after massacre was being committed in Gaza.”[\[17\]](#) After disregarding his own experts, Blinken issued an ultimatum to Israel that it had 30 days to improve the flow of Gaza aid to at least 350 trucks per day. Israel ignored that warning as well, causing State Department officials to announce

that Israel had “failed” to meet the “recommendations” in the ultimatum, but taking no punitive action.[\[18\]](#) A senior official at Oxfam America, one of the aid organizations struggling to work in Gaza, responded that the American decision to continue military support to Israel “has put a final, deadly exclamation point on its policy of disregard for US law and the lives of Palestinians.”[\[19\]](#) In fairness to Biden, on the few occasions when the administration attempted to hold Israel accountable to US law on weapons transfers, the Republicans in Congress invariably erupted with charges of antisemitism.

In further defiance of the international community, Israel enacted a law in November which will ban the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from operating in Gaza and the West Bank. The UNRWA, which is nearly as old as Israel itself, is staffed by some 13,000 employees in Gaza alone, who operate the schools, healthcare clinics and other critical social services. It also acts as the backbone of the international relief effort and is the only lifeline for many Palestinians in Gaza.[\[20\]](#) Meanwhile, the Biden Administration continues to perform the two functions that Israel desires most. First, it maintains the steady flow of munitions and other military support to Israel. Secondly, it keeps the United Nations from “interfering” with Israel’s military operations; specifically, the US uses its veto power in the UN Security Council to oppose calls for a Gaza ceasefire (now four times since the start of the war).[\[21\]](#) Following the most recent US veto on November 20, a Palestinian representative at the UN lamented, “Do they have the right to kill and the only right we have is to die? You are witnessing the attempt to annihilate a nation, destroy a nation. It is not even hidden. It is in plain sight.”[\[22\]](#)





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THE TAIL NOW WAGS THE DOG

Joe Biden's indulgent policy towards Israel's military action of the last fourteen months has not always been the typical American response. In 1982, during Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the IDF began both bombing and shelling the Beirut metropolitan area, resulting in massive civilian casualties. President Reagan, who had a special envoy on the ground, expressed his "outrage" to Israeli Prime Minister Menachim Begin, stating that the attacks had resulted in "needless destruction and bloodshed."^[23] In one phone call to Begin, Reagan described the bombing of Beirut as a "holocaust."^[24] Begin angrily caved and Reagan had the cease-fire that he had requested in a matter of hours.

One year later, Reagan announced that he was suspending the pending transfer of F-16 fighter aircraft to Israel until the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon, citing US law that

American military equipment could be used only for defensive purposes.[\[25\]](#) Earlier, during Israel's 1956 invasion of the Sinai Peninsula (The Suez Crisis), President Eisenhower had also acted with resolve. He issued an ultimatum to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion to withdraw Israeli forces from Egyptian territory, threatening to cut off all American aid to Israel. Ben-Gurion capitulated.[\[26\]](#)

Over the years, the influence of Israel and the ascendancy of America's domestic Zionist lobby have both grown exponentially. The days of an American president essentially dictating to Israel (as per Eisenhower and Reagan) are long gone because there is no political will to do so. Now it is the Israeli tail wagging the American dog, as was noticed even during the Obama Administration.[\[27\]](#) Ironically, over Thanksgiving weekend, President Biden was observed exiting a bookshop on Nantucket, armed with a copy of *The Hundred Year's War on Palestine*, a 2020 book by Palestinian-American academic Rashid Khalidi. Informed of the president's purchase, Khalidi offered a trenchant response: "this is four years too late."[\[28\]](#)

TRUMP ONE REVISITED

Speculation abounds as to how Donald Trump will approach Israel with his new team of militant pro-Zionist appointees. However, we can learn much from the record of Trump's first term as president, where his Middle East policies helped to further radicalize and embolden Israel's stance. In a move in defiance of international law, the Trump administration in 2019 recognized "Israeli sovereignty" over the Golan Heights, captured by Israel from Syria in 1967. After Israel arbitrarily annexed the Golan in 1981, its action was unanimously declared "null and void" by the UN Security Council in Resolution 497. Thus, Trump both defied international law and reversed 57 years of steady American policy that regarded the Golan Heights as an occupied territory. This action was seen as a political gift to Netanyahu for the upcoming Israeli elections. Similarly, in 2018 Trump had officially recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital city. Given that east (old) Jerusalem was also conquered by Israel in 1967 and regarded by the Palestinians as the potential capital of their eventual state, this was another controversial move that was rejected by a majority of world leaders.[\[29\]](#) Simultaneously, the Trump administration announced the move of the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, where today - seven years later - only four other countries have followed suit. As if to rub salt in the wound, the president also closed the diplomatic office of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington.[\[30\]](#) Trump did nothing to advance the peace process with the Palestinians and has shown no concern for Palestinian self-determination. In fact, his administration also reversed longstanding American policy on the West Bank when it declared that "the establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not *per se* inconsistent with international

law.”[31] Trump is often credited for his promotion of the Abrahamic Accords in an effort to expand diplomatic ties between Arab states and Israel. Four Arab countries – Bahrain, UAE, Morocco, and Sudan – agreed to this arrangement, in return for US rewards (or bribes, depending on one’s point of view). Because the accords did not include any Israeli concession towards a Palestinian state, they had the net effect of strengthening Israel’s already overwhelming leverage against the Palestinians.[32] Trump’s tough stance against Israel’s arch-enemy Iran, especially the withdrawal from the so-called Iran “nuclear deal” in 2018, complemented his Israel policy and strengthened the hardcore Zionist rightwing.

TRUMP’S ZIONIST A-TEAM

If personnel is policy, the hardcore pro-Zionist stance of the second Trump Administration was locked in concrete within a week after the November election. For Secretary of State, Trump chose pro-Zionist Florida Senator and Catholic Marco Rubio, who has criticized President Biden for appealing to “anti-Semites” within Democratic ranks and has described Hamas as “vicious animals.”[33] Trump himself once criticized Rubio as a potential “puppet” for Jewish mega-donor and casino magnate Sheldon Adelson before Trump claimed that role for himself.[34] In a November 7 interview with Catholic journalist Raymond Arroyo, Rubio made the following statement which is both factually wrong and disturbingly simplistic: “The source of conflict in the Middle East is not Israel, it’s not the Palestinian question; the sole source of instability and violence in the Middle East is the Ayatollah and Iran.”[35] The pick for National Security Advisor was Florida Congressman Mike Waltz, a former Army Green Beret with hawkish pro-Israel credentials, fully supportive of any Israeli strikes against Iran.[36] The new Ambassador to the United Nations (a cabinet-level position) was New York Congresswoman and Catholic Elise Stefanik, who gained fame in 2023 for her grilling of college presidents over antisemitism on their campuses, even though many student activists, even Jews, were simply drawing attention to the plight of the Palestinians. The choice has been described by *The New Republic* as one that will “wreck Gaza to unseen levels”[37] and by *Newsweek Magazine* as a “gift to Netanyahu.”[38] One must wonder how much influence Stefanik will have with her fellow delegates in the General Assembly which in September voted overwhelmingly for a resolution calling for Israel to end its “unlawful presence” in occupied Palestinian territory. The General Assembly vote easily confirmed an advisory opinion in July of the International Court of Justice. So the U.S. (yet again) placed itself in a hugely isolated position along with only thirteen other countries which opposed the resolution, out of 181 members.[39] As his Director of National Intelligence (DNI), Trump has identified former Democratic Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard. A Hindu, Gabbard has supported the war on Gaza and, as far back as 2015, has lauded the US-Israel relationship before a gathering of the pro-Zionist organization Christians United for Israel (CUFI).[40] Will Gabbard have the integrity to brief

her new boss on intelligence that portrays Israel in a less than flattering light? As ambassador to Israel, Trump chose long-time Christian evangelical and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, who has repeatedly expressed support for Israel's annexation of the West Bank, which he insists on referring to as "Judea and Samaria." Huckabee has stated that "there's really no such thing as a Palestinian."[\[41\]](#) Trump also appointed his long-time Jewish friend and real estate executive Steve Witkoff as his "special envoy to the Middle East." Witkoff has no diplomatic experience, but meets two key Trump criteria - he is a megadonor to Trump campaigns and he is a staunch supporter of Israel.[\[42\]](#) The fact that Trump's first ambassadorial choice was for Israel and that he opted to create a special envoy to the region no doubt reflect his preoccupation with the Middle East. Finally, as a surprise to many, Trump selected 44-year-old Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defense. Although he sports an impressive record as a combat veteran and supporter of veterans, Hegseth's national security and foreign policy experience is almost non-existent. However, his pro-Zionist credentials are impeccable. Of note, Hegseth spoke at a conference in Jerusalem in 2018 where he stated "there's no reason why the miracle of the [re-establishment of the Temple](#) on the [Temple Mount](#) is not possible."[\[43\]](#) As part of his recent Fox News documentary "Battle in the Holy Land - Israel at War," Hegseth posted on social media (X) that "Israel needs our support."[\[44\]](#)

To this team of staunch pro-Zionists must be added new Vice President (and Catholic) J.D. Vance. A clear newcomer to foreign policy, Vance claims that he is "strongly" pro-Israel but may be more ambivalent than all the rest. In a podcast during the election campaign, Vance noted that Israel has the right to defend itself but also that "America's interest is sometimes going to be distinct."[\[45\]](#) Shortly before his selection as Trump's running mate, Vance gave a speech in which he stated, "A big part of the reason why Americans care about Israel is because we are still the largest Christian-majority country in the world, which means that a majority of citizens of this country think that their Savior, and I count myself a Christian, was born and died and resurrected in that narrow little strip of territory on the Mediterranean. The idea that there is ever going to be an American foreign policy that doesn't care a lot about that slice of the world is preposterous."[\[46\]](#) Vance, unfortunately, was only half right. What American Christians should care deeply about is whether their "elder brothers in Christ" (i.e., the Jews) who claim ownership of that narrow strip of land are following Christ's fundamental command to love God and neighbor. By that standard, American Christians should be deeply disappointed, not elated over Israel's continued military successes.

Certainly in some respects all these nominees are outstanding choices who represent America's best and brightest. However, with the possible exception of Vance, they all seem to infected with a Zionist *weltanschauung*, i.e., what's good for Israel's Likud Party is good

for America. The Zionist Organization of America, which had recently honored Stefanik with its Defender of Israel Award, publicly praised all these Trump choices, among others.[\[47\]](#)

Finally, should the Trump Administration need help from the Congress, such as a few more billion dollars for military aid, there is Zionist Speaker of the House Mike Johnson to call on. Johnson received some \$95,000 in campaign donations from the Israeli lobby (AIPAC) in 2024 while shepherding some \$12 billion in grant aid to Israel just since March.[\[48\]](#)

On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced a new ambassador to Washington for the incoming Trump administration. He is Yechiel Leiter, a long-time ally of Netanyahu who was born in Pennsylvania and emigrated to Israel years ago.[\[49\]](#) Predictably, Leiter is a hard-core supporter of West Bank settlements and the war in Gaza, where he lost a son in the fighting in 2023. He was once a member of the radical Jewish Defence League, founded by American rabbi Meir Kahane and which has been classified as a “right-wing terrorist group” by the FBI since 2001.[\[50\]](#)

A TRUMP TWO PREVIEW

Based on Trump’s first term as president and his new cabinet choices, there is every reason to think that he will continue his one-sided and pro-active Zionist agenda. First, Trump is well-aware of his debt to the Israeli lobby, dating back to 2016. And he delivered in spades during his first administration, as noted above. During the 2024 campaign, Jewish megadonor Miriam Adelson (widow of Sheldon) alone donated \$100 million. (Adelson, incidentally, has floated the idea of adding a “Book of Trump” to the Bible, akin to the Book of Esther, celebrating the deliverance of the Jews from ancient Persia.)[\[51\]](#) Trump’s second term promises to be even more assertive than his first, perhaps even a virtual alliance with Israel’s far right. Indeed, just days before the election, hundreds of Jews reportedly traveled to the Biblical site of Shiloh, once home to the Ark of the Covenant, to pray for a Trump victory.[\[52\]](#) Ironically, the enthusiasm for Trump in Israel did not prevent American Jews from giving 79% of their votes to Kamala Harris.[\[53\]](#) However, Netanyahu’s Likud Party and its far-right allies are jubilant over the coming Trump administration, in regard to both Gaza and the West Bank, as well as Iran and other issues.

As for Gaza, Trump has several times called for the release of all Israeli hostages before he assumes office in January, or there will be “hell to pay.”[\[54\]](#) Approximately 63 hostages (out of an original 251) are believed to remain in Hamas custody.[\[55\]](#) Trump has said nothing about the more than 9000 Palestinians who languish in Israeli jails, either serving sentences or in indefinite detention.[\[56\]](#) Likewise, he has called for Israel to “finish the job” in Gaza but was not more specific. Actually, it would be hard to imagine what more could be done by Israel (or Trump) if Hamas fails to release the remaining hostages. Israel has dropped the astronomical figure of 85,000 tons of bombs on Gaza, more than the amount of munitions

expended during World War II. The result, besides the death or horrific injury of at least 150,000 Palestinians,[\[57\]](#) includes catastrophic damage to the environment.[\[58\]](#) The traumatized population is on the verge of starvation and faces the onset of winter, while radical Jewish settlers are anxious to reclaim Gaza for themselves. One Israeli thinktank has called for the “relocation and final settlement of the entire Gaza population.” That was followed by a document from the Israeli intelligence ministry recommending “the transfer of Gaza residents to Sinai” [Egyptian sovereign territory].[\[59\]](#) Some officers in the IDF are promoting a “general’s plan” in which northern Gaza would become a closed military zone, prohibiting the return of its residents who have fled south.[\[60\]](#)

Most intriguing of all is the potential interest by Trump and his Jewish son-in-law, Jared Kushner, in Gaza for its real estate value. Kushner floated the idea in early 2024 with his remark that “Gaza’s waterfront property could be very valuable.” Trump himself observed that Gaza could become a Middle East version of Monaco, i.e., a playground for affluent Europeans. Such remarks can be seen as typical of those more concerned with the generation of wealth than the welfare of people. In reply, a spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) spokesman noted astutely, “the Palestinian people want freedom and justice in Gaza, not a beach resort for Western tourists,” adding: “No economy can thrive under a military blockade that bombs children playing on the beaches of Gaza and shoots down Palestinians using boats to catch fish offshore. Justice and freedom are prerequisites for wealth and tourism.”[\[61\]](#) One must wonder what fate is now in store for the miserable Palestinians of Gaza. Will this once fiercely independent people be turned into waiters, bellhops, and maids for European vacationers? Or displaced to an undisclosed destination, as the United States becomes complicit in a second Trail of Tears?



Palestinians among the rubble of destroyed buildings at the Maghazi refugee camp in southern Gaza Strip, on Jan. 21.

Ahmad Salem/Bloomberg via Getty Images

As for the West Bank, or “Judea and Samaria” to the Zionists, the Palestinians there seem almost as vulnerable as those in Gaza. Israeli settlers have been harassing Palestinians with impunity for months, as noted in our introduction. Spurred by the Trump victory in November, some Israeli officials are revealing their intentions to formally annex the entire West Bank. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has directed the government to prepare for the influx of an additional half million Jewish settlers onto Palestinian land.^[62] Smotrich, one of the most extreme members of Netanyahu’s coalition, has declared that “God willing, the year 2025 will be the year of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria.”^[63] He has also proclaimed his goal of a “greater Israel,” which would include not only the West Bank but portions of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. West Bank Palestinians would surrender their land, properties, and other rights, if they did not agree to deportation.^[64] The expectation, of course, is that under a second Trump administration, the US would readily agree to not only to the Israeli confiscation of land in both Gaza and the West Bank, but to the simultaneous banishment of the Palestinians. As for the rest of the world and the precedents under

international law, the further expectation is that Trump, armed with his diplomatic billy club, including the American veto in the UN Security Council, will ride roughshod over any objections.

So will Donald Trump actually buy in to these revolutionary plans to expand Israeli territory and overturn many decades of UN resolutions, diplomatic agreements, and international precedents? Certainly in Israel the expectations are that he will. Certainly the GOP, soon to be firmly in control of the US government, will support such actions; some (think Lindsey Graham, Tom Cotton) will even clamor for it. Cotton has even introduced legislation that would ban use of the term “West Bank” by the federal government, to be replaced by “Judea and Samaria.”[\[65\]](#) The Democrats, on the other hand, are clearly conflicted on Israel. In October, 88 Congressional Democrats urged Biden to impose sanctions on two of Netanyahu’s ministers (including Bezalel Smotrich) for their roles in inciting settler violence on the West Bank.[\[66\]](#) A week later, 18 Democratic senators joined Bernie Sanders in opposing a new proposed “sale” (funded by the American taxpayers) of military equipment because of Israel’s human rights record in violation of two US laws.[\[67\]](#) In the short term, differences over Israel may weaken the Democrats, but the Republican stance of effectively acting as a rubber stamp for the Likud Party is bound to end in disaster.

Let’s now consider the turmoil inside Israel. The ongoing cost of war for Israel is unprecedented, possibly reaching \$55 billion. Some 40,000 Israeli businesses may soon file for bankruptcy.[\[68\]](#) The lucrative tourism industry has ground to a halt.[\[69\]](#) And Israel’s international credit ratings have been downgraded for the first time in its history. Then there is the toll on the IDF itself after months of combat. The suicide rate among Jewish soldiers is a major concern. Although the government refuses to provide statistics, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* has confirmed at least ten suicides in the first seven months of the war, a figure suspected to be far too low. Mental health, including PTSD, is another problem. According to CNN, “...more than a third of those [IDF soldiers] removed from combat are found to have mental health issues. In a statement in August, the Israeli defense ministry’s rehabilitation division said that every month, more than 1,000 new wounded soldiers are removed from fighting for treatment, 35% of whom complain about their mental state, with 27% developing ‘a mental reaction or post-traumatic stress disorder.’” (For more horrific details, see the referenced CNN report.)[\[70\]](#) Finally, despite loyalty from Israelis to their government, there are increasing doubts about Netanyahu’s intentions and conduct of the war, suspected to help him avoid a criminal trial on charges of corruption. Certainly, if his primary goal is the return of Israeli hostages, a months-long bombing campaign in Gaza and the rejection of multiple ceasefire offers is hardly the way to accomplish it. Meanwhile, two former prime ministers (Ehud Barak and Yair Lapid) have called for Netanyahu’s ouster.[\[71\]](#) In short, it is quite clear that Netanyahu’s war is tearing at the fabric of Israeli

society.

The reaction of the international community will also continue to be problematic. That includes Israel's 22 Arab neighbors and the 27 states in the European Union, both of which have strongly supported the "two-state solution" so long obstructed by Israel with American complicity. They will surely not tolerate an Israeli take-over of the West Bank. That said, many observers already consider the two-state solution as dead, given the current overwhelming animosity on both sides. For example, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who has spent 35 years in the Holy Land, has called the two-state solution "not realistic," stating that "...no one wants a wider conflict, but no one is able to stop it."[\[72\]](#) Within the Arab world, the war in Gaza has been a huge catalyst for unrest on the "Arab street." Former Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher agrees with Pizzaballa that the two-state solution is over. Muasher, who has arguably invested more effort in a Middle East peace than any other Arab diplomat, is now hugely pessimistic. In a November interview, he summarized the problem succinctly: "[The] public...across the Arab world, has been very radicalised by October 7 today, and no one wants to talk peace today. You know, a majority of people now think that the only way to end the occupation is through armed resistance, and that has never been the case, even among Palestinians. Sixty-five percent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, in a poll done after October 7, think that the only way to end the occupation is through armed resistance. And of course, more than 80 percent of the Israelis do not want a two-state solution. Netanyahu has called the two-state solution a reward for terrorism. So this is where we are now."[\[73\]](#)

And this is the seemingly insoluble problem that will confront the new Trump administration. Trump will be unable to build on the Abrahamic accords, arguably the biggest foreign policy success in his first administration. The Arabs are in no mood to negotiate and many believe they were duped into playing their "diplomatic recognition of Israel" card in exchange for - a war on Gaza. Trump has also been deliberately vague about what might happen to the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank. The Israeli right continues to float the proposal that they be transferred to Jordan or to the Sinai in Egypt. Aside from the inconvenient fact that forced transfers of populations are against international law, both Egypt and Jordan have spoken repeatedly and adamantly against it.[\[74\]](#)

In summary, the breezy, self-confident manner in which Trump tackles the great issues of the day is sure to run into an immovable obstacle if he attempts to align with the radical Israeli right. Indeed, when it comes to Israel, the new Trump cabinet is starting to look like the re-incarnation of George Bush's neo-cons (Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, etc.). Repeating his Iraq gambit of 2003, Netanyahu may entice the new administration into a

military confrontation with Iran, and it may well be ready to oblige. Often forgotten is that Netanyahu has long been using the Iran ploy with the US. In his 1996 address to a joint session of Congress, he warned that Iran's "deadline for attaining this goal [nuclear capability] is getting extremely close."[\[75\]](#) That was almost 30 years ago. As for Donald Trump, whatever his shortcomings, he is not a man of violence. He will look to make a deal, although it is by no means clear what deal is possible. Perhaps the Israelis will push him too far. Perhaps a daily dose of intelligence briefings with graphic images of butchered bodies will move his heart. Perhaps he will start to think of his legacy as a great president. Perhaps the prayers of American Christians will help him craft a just agreement for peace. Perhaps, but not likely.

POST-SCRIPT

In one of St. Paul's several references to the Jews in his epistles, he speaks of a "blindness" of the Jewish race: "For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, (lest you should be wise in your own conceits), that blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles should come in" (Romans 11:25). It is not hard to conclude that Zionism today continues the blindness of the Jewish people and may well be its ultimate stage. Under Zionist ideology, the Jews have no need for a God or a messiah. Zionism is, after all, the Jewish variation of modernism, i.e., "I believe in man." For Zionists, their paradise is the land of Israel, created to be a "closed utopia" for Jews (a term thoughtfully coined by holocaust survivor Israel Shahak).[\[76\]](#) But the past century has proven that Zionism could not exist without the active and enthusiastic support of Christians. So it is certain that a similar blindness infects the Gentiles; its name is Christian Zionism. With that in mind, let's pose the following questions to the new Trump administration, which no doubt will never receive a direct answer:

For Marco Rubio: You have been an outspoken critic of China's human rights record and your nomination as Secretary of State has been welcomed by Uyghurs and Tibetans. Do you really think that the killing of some 44,000 Palestinians in Gaza, with American weapons paid for by American citizens, is consistent with American policy and international law? As a veteran legislator, do you believe that the human rights provisions of the Foreign Assistance Act do not apply to Israel?[\[77\]](#) Have you ever studied the Geneva Conventions?

For Mike Huckabee: You claim to have made more than one hundred visits to Israel including "Judea and Samaria." Are you not remotely troubled by the continued Israeli confiscation of Palestinian land, bulldozing of Arab property, and the lawless eviction of helpless Palestinian families from their homes, farms, and businesses? Are you content to see the Palestinians, including the Christians, treated like the evil Amalekites of old? As a

Baptist pastor, have you ever read the parable of the Good Samaritan? And do you not recall these words of Christ to His smug Jewish audience – “For I tell you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (Matt 3:9)?

For Donald Trump: With your fabulous wealth and high-flying lifestyle, you have probably not missed a meal in decades. How can you remain oblivious to the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza brought on by Israel’s actions which are enforcing starvation on two million residents? Does this make Israel a “light to the nations?” Does US complicity with this make America great again?

The late Jerry Falwell, during an address in Israel in the early 1980’s, made a remark that has proven almost unfailingly true over the last 40 years: “The day is coming when no candidate will be elected in the United States who is not pro-Israel.”^[78] With the onset of the second Trump Administration, it is fair to say that the United States has joined Israel as the second Zionist nation, both of which have nuclear weapons. Under Netanyahu and Trump, Israel and the United States are now effectively joined at the hip, which does not auger well. Not for America, Israel, the Palestinians, or the world.

Queen of Peace, who walked the land of Palestine with your divine Son, pray for us, and especially Donald Trump.

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