

Pope Francis Should Go to Gaza! It's Time to End Israel's Destruction of Christianity in Palestine

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*The death of **former President Jimmy Carter** started me thinking about how long it's been since the United States has been led by a head of state who was also a thoroughly decent human being.*

*To be sure, while in office Carter [made many mistakes](#) in terms of both foreign and national security policy, but much can be attributed to his inexperience and his unfortunate reliance on hardliners in his cabinet, most particularly Russophobe **Zbigniew Brzezinski**, who was his National Security Adviser.*

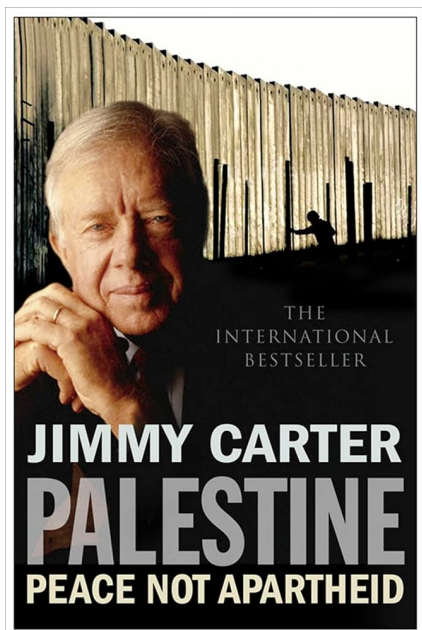
*The neocons were also beginning to make their presence felt while scheming and conspiring under the protection of **Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson**, the so-called Senator from Boeing. After failing to get reelected in 1980, Carter dedicated much of his life to helping people worldwide through a foundation that he established and he was renowned for speaking his mind when he observed a human rights problem that might be addressed.*

I personally had my five minutes face-to-face with Jimmy Carter while he was still president and he, to my mind, demonstrated to me what kind of man he truly was. I was part of the CIA station in a European country and one of my first jobs was to set up a huge funding operation, referred to as a covert action, to subvert and overthrow a government in another part of the world that the Agency and US State Department did not approve of. My role was to convince one of the political parties in the country where I was based to exploit its friendly relations with another country next door to the target to secretly establish a clandestine base for a guerrilla movement that would be engaged in subverting its neighbor. It would create a double-cutout that would serve as a conduit to fund and arm the rebels using two foreign political parties, concealing the US role in the intended regime change as was appropriate for a "covert action."

After many quiet meetings with the local politicians to include considerable bribery and pledges of secrecy an arrangement was made, but one week later a senior CIA officer flew in from Washington and came by the Embassy to tell me and the Chief of Station that that deal was off. He provided no reasons for the change of heart, but we were disappointed as it had been a lot of work and was apparently successful from the perspective of what the policy makers had asked us to do. The European partner political party central to the plan, and expecting to profit greatly from it, was informed of the decision and expressed its anger in no uncertain terms by breaking off contact with me and the Station.

As it happened, President Jimmy Carter made a visit to the same European capital city two

months later and stopped by the US Embassy. To my astonishment, he asked to see me privately in the Ambassador's office and both apologized and explained that the change in plans had been caused by the realization that the US would be arming and paying for insurgents who would no doubt kill significant numbers of civilians. He explained that that was a price too high to pay and the sordid arrangement might even be leaked to the media with an election coming up. I thanked him for the background information and we parted. I had the impression from his language and demeanor that he, rather than some power mad bureaucrat at CIA or State, had personally made the decision to abort the operation at least partly due to his own moral reservations.



Thinking about my encounter with Jimmy Carter in the context of his death, indeed more about his life and his fundamental decency, I considered what it might be like if we Americans again had someone like him in government. As many readers will be aware, Carter was particularly outspoken about what was being done to the Palestinians by Israel. He was roasted and called an antisemite by America's Israel Lobby after he displayed the temerity to defend the Palestinians and criticize Israeli behavior in his book [Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid](#), which was published in 2006. Few in the Democratic Party were brave enough to stand up for him and the politicians that followed him received the message that calling out Israel would not be tolerated, so they generally shut themselves off from any sympathy for the victims of Israeli aggression, saying rhythmically and over-and-over again like a satanic chorus that "Israel has a right to defend itself!"

The death of Carter triggered another possible initiative to be considered as reflected in an email I had received from a friend in the peace movement the day before. My friend was complaining about the lack of any condemnation from world leaders for what is occurring in Palestine and she asked herself what would happen if someone like Pope Francis were to travel to Gaza in a peacekeeping role. Surely even monsters like **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** would have to pay attention to the possible impact of such a proposal and would have to let the Pope visit with the remaining Catholic community in Gaza to help ease their suffering. The Vatican has, in fact, already put out feelers in that direction. On December 22nd it convinced Israeli authorities to allow Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the leader of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, to enter Gaza and celebrate [a pre-Christmas Mass](#) with surviving members of the territory's small Christian community. A more

aggressive move involving the Pope himself might even lead to a ceasefire and something like a peace arrangement that would enable the two communities to work out some formula to live side by side even though it is difficult to imagine such an outcome given the hardline of the Israeli government and its clear intention to proceed with the elimination of the Palestinians.

Organized Christianity, apparently terrified of being labeled antisemitic by the usual strident voices in the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), has been largely [silent and ineffective](#) when confronted by the systematic Israeli destruction of the Christian faith in the land where it was born. Indeed, America's largely Bible belt Christian Zionists generally applaud Israeli suppression of what it agrees to call "terrorists." Pope Francis has in fact [bravely spoken out](#) about Gaza and has been as a consequence attacked by the Israeli government and the usual suspects in Europe and the US. Nevertheless, there is no official Catholic church pronouncement on Israel/Palestine as far as I have been able to determine except for calls for peace and a ceasefire, though there are a few activists who have been demanding that a more definitive position be developed. Some American Catholics have even been demonstrating and [holding signs](#) in front of churches and diocesan offices urging Pope Francis to go to Gaza. Can individual Catholics persuade their parish priests to take a stronger line and pressure bishops and the church hierarchy to "do something?" I am convinced that this is a movement that is just waiting to happen and that once it starts it will capture the public imagination because it attacks a genocidal horror and is manifestly the right thing to do. Certainly, those who believe that life and also freedom of worship are gifts from God have seen enough posters of dead babies and desecrated churches and hospitals to begin to demand that the Church must harness its moral authority to the cause of peace and make it happen.

Some are arguing against a Papal trip to Gaza based on the security issue, that Netanyahu is quite willing and capable of having the Pope killed and setting up a "false flag" scenario blaming it on the Palestinians, a line which will be eagerly picked up and "verified" by the corrupted governments and Zionist controlled media in Washington and London just for starters. Pope Francis is quite old and in poor health, so he might well regard such an Apostolic trip on a peace mission as a final high point that would actually accomplish something of real value during his time on the Throne of Saint Peter. It would certainly be a historic gesture that could well turn the horrors taking place in the Middle East in a new direction. I am sure that Jimmy Carter, if he were still with us, would approve.

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