
Why Should I Care?

2019

It's a legitimate question. With all that's going on in the world, what business do we have caring about a long-running conflict in the Middle East? There are a handful of reasons that explain why we, at Telos, care about this conflict and believe that most Americans should care too. They are as follows:

1. Because we are already involved

- a. Prior to 2018, the U.S. contributed \$400m+ per year in Palestinian development aid. In 2018 this was almost entirely cut. As of 2018, the U.S. contributes more than \$3.8b per year in foreign military funding to Israel, making Israel America's largest recipient of foreign aid money.
- b. America's veto on the U.N. Security Council often prevents international action on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For instance, America has consistently vetoed statements and actions that oppose Israeli settlements in the West Bank.
- c. The American voice—and in particular the American Christian voice—is loud and, sadly, rarely pro/pro/pro. We have preferred to pick one side over another.
- d. So the question we have to ask ourselves is not 'should we be involved?' but 'how can we be better involved in this conflict so that we're pursuing peace?'

2. Because it's practical

- a. Peacemaking is an essential part of the development puzzle. We can spend all the money in the world on aid and economic development, only for it all to be lost the moment violent conflict breaks out. And when it does, it's often women and children who suffer the most. Peacemaking ensures the long-term success of our development progress.

3. Because it's inspirational, educational, transformative

- a. Glimpses of peace in the most complex of circumstances offers hope for our own conflicts.
- b. There are lessons to be learned from the incredible peacemakers we met.
- c. For religious communities, when we help bring healing to places of conflict, we model the purpose, beauty, and glory of our God.

4. Because it's our responsibility

- a. Every conflict has three sides and America still plays *the* leading third side role in this conflict, and has done for the last half century. The current status quo is therefore partly our making. And if we were to abdicate responsibility, which nations and powers would we abdicate to?
- b. If we believe in a more just world, and that, given our power, we have a responsibility to use our resources and influence to bring such a world into existence, then we ought to engage effectively on behalf of peace and justice in Israel/Palestine.
- c. Christians must take seriously Christ's call in Matthew 5:9, and the model of Jesus' life that brought hope and light to dark places. Some may ask, 'what's the point in peacemaking in a world always in conflict?' But just as there will always be poverty (Matt 26:11), Christians are still called to meet the needs of those in need (Matt 25), and this includes helping to bring peace in places where conflict causes continual suffering.

5. Because the Holy Land is losing one of its primary voices

- a. Whether you are religious or not, you likely recognize the significance of Israel-Palestine as a land of enormous importance to the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jerusalem would simply not contain its beauty if it were not a holy city. Yet one of those voices is in danger of being lost. For many reasons, but in large part due to the conflict, Christians have been leaving the Holy Land in large numbers, particularly in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. It will be a sad day when the land no longer sings in all three voices.