

Gaza Facing a Christmas Genocide

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Palestine's Christian community is – not surprisingly – the oldest in the world, dating back to the first century.

In Gaza, the community is now tiny, with just some 800 to 1,000 Christians remaining. But Gaza's churches are some of the oldest in existence anywhere on the planet.

Now these churches are shelters for refugees, and Christians are targets of Israel's genocidal violence.

On 19 October, the third oldest church in the world, the Church of Saint Porphyrius, was [hit by an Israeli airstrike](#), killing 18 people.

Ibrahim Jahsan survived the strike and continues to shelter there with his family. He told Al Jazeera, "We were baptized here and we will die here."

Two weeks later, the Israeli military [bombed](#) the Greek Orthodox Cultural Center in the southern Gaza City neighborhood of Tel al-Hawa.

Food, blankets, gas cylinders and other much needed supplies were destroyed in the blast. The destruction of cultural centers and religious sites features as part of the definition of genocide.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem released a statement condemning the attack.

"Such attacks on civilians, particularly children, and the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure, cannot be justified on rational or humanitarian grounds and are fundamentally at odds with even the most basic moral values."

The World Council of Churches joined in condemning the attacks, calling them a "clear violation of international law."

Gaza's only Christian hospital was also bombed. A blast rocked Gaza City's al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in October. Hundreds died in the explosion, hundreds were injured. Israel [denied responsibility](#) for the carnage.

In Cold Blood

Dr. Ghassan Abu Sitta [described](#) the scene to NBC News. He was in an operating room when the ceiling collapsed on him. He says he made his way to the exit where he witnessed "people carrying wounded and walking wounded with blood streaming down covered in dust."

Both the [World Health Organization](#) and [Doctors Without Borders](#) condemned the attack.

On 16 December, Nahida Antoun and her daughter Samar Antoun were shot to death by Israeli snipers as they walked inside the grounds of the Holy Family Parish in Gaza. At least seven other members of Gaza's only Catholic Church were wounded by sniper fire.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem [said](#): "One was killed as she tried to carry the other to safety."

"They were shot in cold blood."

The patriarchate posted photos of damage to the Church from missile attacks. The damage shows fires and extreme destruction to the convent. The tweet indicates that "deaths and injuries of a number of citizens in the Latin convent of Gaza" occurred and calls for an "end [to] this senseless conflict."

Pope Francis [condemned](#) the attack: "Unarmed civilians are being bombed and shot at, and this has happened inside the Holy Family Parish complex, where there are no terrorists, but families, children, sick people with disabilities, nuns."

The Pope continued, "Some say, 'It's terrorism, it's war.' Yes, it is war. It is terrorism."

This is the second time the Pope has accused Israel of terrorism. On 22 November, the pontiff said Israel had gone [beyond war](#): "This is not war. This is terrorism."

Indeed, it is terrorism. It is terrorism against Palestinians, and some of the most vulnerable Palestinians are the minority Christian population now besieged in the few churches in Gaza.

Israel is targeting this small population of Christians and they're doing it at Christmas.

The Israeli military is bombing churches, destroying Christian community centers, and sending snipers to shoot Christian women to death while the world watches, all part of the [ninth stage of genocide](#): Extermination.

How many Christians will be left when Israel is done?

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Featured image: People sheltering at the Saint Porphyrius Orthodox church which was hit by an Israeli airstrike on Thursday, killing 18 including several children [Abdelhakim Abu Riash/Al Jazeera]

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