

# Christianity in Africa: The cost of loyalty to Zionism

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For Israel, the demographic significance of Christians in sub-Saharan Africa presents an opportunity to exchange development aid, trade deals and military agreements for votes in global forums. In this article, the author examines the idea of Israel as a trustworthy diplomatic partner of African countries by considering the impact of Zionism on Christian views. The author drew on media articles for examples of initiatives with African countries, and on reports, calls and minutes of global bodies to reflect on ecclesial and spiritual identities. In contrast to the prevailing perception among Christians in Africa, Zionism cannot be associated with liberation theology. Loyalty to Zionism undermines indigenous spiritual notions, the ideal of an authentic African identity, and Christianity itself. There is an urgent need for theological schools, church leaders and clergy to familiarise themselves with the reality and take the lead in critically assessing and reviewing any hermeneutics and beliefs that inform support for Zionism.

**Contribution:** This article highlights the threat of Israel's diplomacy in Africa to religious identity, integrity and freedom. As an interdisciplinary, contextual contribution to the sociology of religion, it reveals that loyalty to Israel, a Zionist State, jeopardises Christ's message of inclusive compassion, justice and equality.

**Keywords:** African spirituality; Christian Zionism; reformed theology; Israel's scramble for Africa; Palestine-Israel.

## Introduction

The vote of every country counts in international bodies such as the United Nations. In recent years, Israel has embarked on a search for political allies in the African continent which has the largest number of countries in the world. Africa has a history of condemning the racist nature of Zionism. The focus of the Organization of African Unity on Racism in Palestine, South Africa and Zimbabwe, in its Resolution 77 (XII) of August 1975, for example, became a crucial frame of reference for the United Nations Resolution 3379 of November 1975 that determined that Zionism promotes racial discrimination (Baroud 2019a).

Today Africa's solidarity with the Palestinian struggle is being eroded because of Israel's sharpened efforts to foster alliances on the continent. On opening an Israeli embassy in Rwanda, *The Times of Israel* (2019) announced that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu 'has made expanding diplomatic ties in Africa one of his key foreign policy objectives'. By 2019, Israel had established ties across East Africa, notably in Uganda and Kenya, with plans to expand its diplomatic presence to Chad, Mali and Niger (Baroud 2019b). As Yuval Rotem, the Director General of Israel Foreign Affairs, reiterated 'we are returning to Africa' (Bizimungu 2019).

In this strategic drive, Israel claims kinship based on a shared history of suffering. At the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke of 'a natural affinity' between Israel and Africa, because '(w)e have, in many ways, similar histories. Your nations toiled under foreign rule. You experienced horrific wars and slaughters. This is very much our history' (Baroud 2019b). At the opening of the Rwandese embassy in Kigali, Israeli official Rotem also referred to the relationship between the two countries in terms of familial ties and heroism: 'We are both small countries which have suffered greatly. I believe it is fair to say that we have both risen from the ashes in all of our history' (Bizimungu 2019). The response from Richard Sezibera, Rwanda's Foreign Affairs Minister, creates the impression that Israel's portrayal of being a force for the greater good of humanity fell on fertile ground. Bizimungu (2019) reported:

**Note: Special collection:** Historical Thought and Source Interpretation.

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The strength and resilience shown by both countries to overcome tragedy will continue to bring our people and leaders together in our common determination to build a more just global order. (03 March 2023)

However, one cannot assume that former experiences of injustice guarantee a shared future agenda or values between parties. Past suffering does not guarantee respectful relationships. Victimhood does not necessarily imply honesty, justice, equality or compassion for others. In invoking the image of Israel as an underdog, Netanyahu failed to mention that Israel, a military superpower, is funded and protected by the United States. He said nothing about Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land and its legitimising of discrimination based on race and religion. As Baroud (2019b) remarks, 'Netanyahu attempted not only to cover the ugly face of Zionist colonialism and deceive Africans but also rob Palestinians of their history'.

To partner with Israel has nothing to do with a vision for a more just global order. In the same month that the Israeli embassy opened in Kigali, South Africa permanently withdrew its ambassador from Tel Aviv as a first step to downgrade its diplomatic ties with Israel. This followed several failed attempts over years to engage with Israel within the framework of international human rights laws. According to Na'eem Jeenah of the Afro Middle East Center, South Africa had had enough of Israel's violence against civilians. Not only has Israel taken South Africa's role for granted, he argues, but it has 'exploited those efforts in order to fulfil its own agenda – strengthen trade links, etc.', while refusing South African help with mediation (Oneko & Schwikowski 2019).

Since 2016, Israel has fostered ties with Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and South Sudan through the sales of armaments and the sharing of military and security expertise. Israel also pursues African political partnerships in contexts of corruption, and Kenya is one of its victories. While Netanyahu warmly embraced Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta as a friend in November 2017 at the inauguration of the latter, the Kenyan public objected to Kenyatta's claim of receiving 98% of votes in the election and rebelled against the country's corrupt ruling classes (Baroud 2019c). Israel uses its strategy of strengthening questionable regimes by offering security and military technology in exchange for diplomatic support also elsewhere in Africa. This approach to win trust, as well as Israel's investment, trading and tourism opportunities, and its development aid in the form of solar, water and agricultural technology, must be viewed critically.

Israel also lies to its own Jewish citizens and other Jews. In a case study on what motivates Jewish Israelis and South Africans to campaign for Palestinian rights, one of the key insights was the activists' understanding that the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians cannot be described as a clash between peers. Israel, a military superpower supported by the United States, oppresses Palestinians systemically and through various means (Mombert 2017:24–27). The Jewish

Israelis, for example, experienced shock, anger, inner turmoil and a deep shame upon discovering the massive gap between reality and what they were led to believe. 'I lived a lie growing up and I'm furious about it!' exclaimed one, while a former pilot felt that everyone he trusted – his parents, the military commanders, his teachers – turned his generation into murderers (Mombert 2017:113). These men are part of a growing number of Jewish Israelis who educate fellow citizens on the wrongs in their society.

They, and the rest of the 21 respondents in the case study – whether Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or not religious, objected to the plethora of misinformation that skews discussions to hide the asymmetry in military, socio-political and economic power, and that Israel has no intention of granting Palestinians their human rights as allowed for in international law. For the South African Christians, the abuse of their faith to justify the oppression of Palestinians is a major reason why they speak up in public. They felt that the proverbial rug was ripped from under their feet when they realised modern Israel's true agenda. In their view, the State of Israel, strengthened by the active or tacit approval of Christians, represents the very opposite of justice and compassion for the oppressed, and there is a dire need to critically assess Christian hermeneutics and theologies in support of oppression (Mombert 2017:158).

To establish rapport with Africa based on a shared history of suffering with Israel misrepresents history, it masks the present unjust reality and it omits Israel's Zionist imperialism and its disregard of Palestinians' human rights and dignity. Thus, Israel's narrative of innocence and peaceful intentions cannot be taken at face value. The role of Christianity in this strategy warrants an investigation. This article in theological ethics examines the idea of Israel as a benign partner in Africa through the lens of some myths and legends in Christian Zionism.

## Method

This interdisciplinary research draws on media articles for current examples of initiatives between Israel and sub-Saharan African countries, as well as on scholarly publications and reports, calls and minutes of global bodies for insights on religious and civil identities. While the examples and arguments on what it means when Christians in Africa support Zionism are by no means exhaustive, the author examines tensions between indigenous spiritual concepts, Zionist myths, colonialism and apartheid with reference to the building of an ecumenical cathedral in Ghana, and discussions between reformed churches.

## The price of Zionism in sub-Saharan Christianity

Africa has 54 countries, of which 47 are in sub-Saharan Africa. Christianity, as the dominant religious tradition, includes Catholic, Protestant, African Initiated, Orthodox and other denominations. Being one of the largest and fastest-

growing faith communities on the continent, about a third of Africa's Christians are members of African Initiated Churches with its networks that reach into remote rural areas (eds. Öhlmann, Gräb & Frost 2020:21). However, the boundaries between African Initiated Churches and other denominations are not rigid because of a sense of shared belonging, and substantial shifts between these and other denominations tend to take place within relatively short times. Moreover, many members of Catholic or historical Protestant Churches are also affiliated with African Initiated Churches, although this is not reflected in official statistics (eds. Öhlmann et al. 2020:4–11). This dynamic fluidity and heterogenous nature of Christianity needs to be borne in mind in the discussion that follows.

### By Africans, and for Africans?

To be 'African Initiated' means to intentionally identify with African solutions. These churches were founded on this continent, by Africans, and expressly for Africans (eds. Öhlmann, et al. 2020:21) to dissociate with European and North American mission influences. African Initiated Churches share a history – and a choice – of financial and institutional independence from the global North in a deliberate attempt to resist being usurped by dualist, linear, and mechanistic worldviews associated with Western Enlightenment and modernity.

Considering this perspective, Öhlmann, et al. (eds. 2020: 4–11) distinguish broadly between three developments in African Initiated Churches. In the first, the Independent or Nationalist Churches gained ecclesial independence from mission churches, starting in the 1880s. In the next two developments, the African Independent Churches originated since the start of the 20th century, and the African Pentecostal or Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches came into being in the 1970s.

These three strands of African Initiated Churches differ in the extent to which they associate with indigenous African culture, traditions and cosmology. As a grassroots response to Christianity, the African Independent Churches fully reclaim indigenous African culture, traditions and cosmological symbols in their praxis. This indigenous perspective is characterised by a monistic or an all-pervasive reality in which everything is interconnected. Thus, all that is out there – the individual, the community, the rest of the world, the past, the present and the future – are interrelated. There is a reciprocal relation between the individual and the communal as expressed variously in concepts such as *Ilosiwaju* and *Omoluabi* by the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, and in the South African understanding of *ubuntu* (Louw 1998:3–4; eds. Öhlmann et al. 2020:9–10).

When Africans' focus on the agency of the spiritual realm and ancestors in everyday life is seen to own Christ's message in the context of the African cosmology, it represents an empowering and authentic act of identification. As such, African Independent Churches' conceptualising of Christianity

represents a socio-cultural protest against the colonising of Africa that suppresses and devalues African solutions to life. After centuries of abuse, the choice for an African-centred Christianity resists external influences that disregard, disrespect or exploit Africans' identity and dignity (Bowers-Du Toit 2020:319–320; Mhajida 2020:20).

The more recent development of urban-centred and prosperity-preaching Pentecostals is inspired by North American televangelism, but African Pentecostalism should not be confused with the North American movement. As with African Independent Churches, they are independent of Western mission denominations. They are not only indigenous in their capacity to mobilise resources and leadership, but also incorporate cosmological symbols that relate, for example, to the power of the mystic spirit world (eds. Öhlmann et al. 2020:49). Although they seem culturally less traditional than the African Independent Churches, they also resist being shaped by forms of Western imperialism that devalue Africans' agency and dignity.

In all African Initiated Churches 'development' is not just a material concept, but a deeply spiritual concept that is interconnected with the material reality (Ter Haar 2011:3–25; Wepener 2019:159–178). Daniel Okoh, the Nigerian Bishop and International Chairman of the Organization of African Instituted Churches, the largest umbrella body of African Initiated Churches, explained the intensely religious approach of sub-Saharan Africans that serves as a lens onto everything else as follows:

[... A]nything that touches the religion of the people, they take it very seriously. And because of our colonial history, there is a way that people look at secular things ... and government is still seen as something that is very far away. But if it is religion, people take it to heart. And so, when you are talking about bringing the spiritual and the [...] the social, it is important because, it is only by doing that, that you can actually engage the active participation of the people. And the people would come into it and say, 'this thing, God is in this thing, you must be very, very careful'. That is how you can get something positive in transparency, in accountability and all that, because of the spiritual aspect ... So, for Africa, because of the religious nature, you'll always find a way of using it to get the [...] commitment of the people to the project, whatever it is. If it is water, it must be explained spiritually. If it is [an] agricultural project, it must be explained spiritually ... Honestly, if you don't do that, you will lose it. (eds. Öhlmann et al. 2020:12–13)

Whether Pentecostal or African Independent, the praxis of African Initiated Churches espouses a dynamic relation between the seen and the unseen realms to encompass all aspects of being human in a monistic view of all that is out there. The Holy Spirit and ancestors are understood as part of a vital life force with direct impact on the social fabric of daily life. In this monistic view, development is intertwined with religion and it is sustainable if it respects and improves not only material and social dimensions of life, but also benefits ecological, political, spiritual, individual and any other dimensions relevant to enable access to abundant life.

Without such connectedness with all that represents human flourishing, development has no spiritual contribution. Without spiritual meaning, development is perceived to disrespect the African consciousness and view of reality. Put differently, development initiatives not woven into the spiritual fibre are viewed as mechanistic, fractured, unintegrated and forced. If development is to have moral integrity, it should not be a means to an end or merely instrumental, but it must benefit both the seen and the unseen realms, as both are equally relevant. The one cannot improve without the other. However, if such support comes from a non-African party who wants to manipulate Africans, such assistance is invasive and does not serve Africans' desire to be free and empowered.

### Blessed by Zionism?

Both Christianity and Zionism have been introduced from outside of Africa, and have become enculturated in African spirituality.

Christian Zionism, a theological doctrine with roots going back to the Protestant Reformation in Britain, is a religious movement in which Christians embrace literal, eschatological hermeneutics (Sizer 2002:3). In Africa, the influence of Zionism can be traced back to the 1920s when it gained a foothold in East Africa. Ironically, Africans often understand Zionism in the context of their desire to be free from being marginalised and colonised (Mhajida 2020:19–20). Zionism is associated with liberation theology and with the plight of the oppressed (Mhajida 2020:33). Israel, as a religious symbol, has become a beacon of hope (Moshi 2020:107). To be on the side of Jews is understood as being on the side of God, and those who bless Israel are assumed to be blessed by God. This theology with its uncritical view of the State of Israel offers fertile ground for Israel's campaign to gain diplomatic support in Africa.

If one considers, for example, the partnership between Israel and Ghana, it seems – at least at first glance – as if Israel acknowledges the local Christians' spirituality. A closer look reveals that Israel's purported respect for transparency, human dignity, community wellbeing, justice and the integrity of the partnership itself, raises questions.

The Ghanaian population totalled 26 million in 2012, of whom 69% were Christian. Of these, 44% were African Initiated Christians, 22% were Catholic, 21% were Protestant and the remaining 13% associated with other denominations (Adeboye 2020:123–133). In 2018, President Akufo-Addo revealed plans for a new interdenominational and interfaith cathedral that is meant to be a 'physical embodiment of unity, harmony and spirituality' between all people in Ghana and as such would also serve a national purpose (Lynch 2018). In addition to being a holy house of prayer and service, the venue would also house 'formal state occasions of a religious nature, such as presidential inaugurations, state funerals and national thanksgiving services' (Lynch 2018). The construction of this extravagant cathedral has been heavily

criticised. Critics are concerned about the ecological impact, the huge costs, that other infrastructural needs will be neglected and that Christianity is prioritised in the national identity. Ghana's political leadership has close relations with Israel – who has positioned itself in this relation as a partner sensitive to the intimate connection between spirit, matter and development in Africa. The Ghana Israel Alliance (GIA), which offers bi-lateral trade and relations for cultural, religious and economic exchange, for example, overtly links development support and religion. Invoking Christian Zionist language, it refers to itself as an essential cultural pillar that is 'a blessed initiative and those in it will be blessed' (One Connection n.d.).

On 05 March 2020, Ghana's president laid the foundation stone for the new ecumenical, national cathedral in Accra (Annang 2020). He was joined by leaders of the country's major churches, government officials, ambassadors, traditional authorities and delegates from the civil sector. The stone, imported from Jerusalem and believed to possess special spiritual powers, was a gift from Shani Cooper, Israeli Ambassador to Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. According to Cooper, the stone's special spiritual properties will sanctify the new cathedral and protect its foundation and the land on which it will be built, because for Christians, Jerusalem is the holiest of cities and Israel's involvement in the construction will strengthen ties between the two countries (Africa News 2020). The Ghanaian president, in turn, spoke of the prestigious value of the cathedral that:

[W]ill be an iconic infrastructure for national, regional and international pilgrimage and tourism. It will be a monument to religious liberty. Its construction deserves the full support of the nation. (Africa News, 06/03/2020, n.p.)

Neither the president, the Israeli ambassador nor any of the media articles covering the event mentioned Israel's systemic oppression of Christians in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Hebron, Haifa, Nazareth and elsewhere in Israel and Palestine. The State of Israel was portrayed as a dignified friend and the President of Ghana suggested that the bond with Israel is honourable and promotes community well-being. How Israel's civil, political, cultural and religious discrimination against non-Jews can inspire 'religious liberty', or sanctify a Christian cathedral, was not explained.

The inculturation of Zionism in African Christianity raises serious questions about the historical, political, moral and hermeneutical understandings and agendas of churches. Factors such as the uncritical perceptions of Israel combined with the emphasis on a 'blessings-prosperity' paradigm (Moshi 2020:111) threaten personal and communal integrity and spiritual well-being. To wilfully use the spiritual language of an African view of life to mislead Ghanaians and any other Africans, in effect, colonises minds and hearts. It neither liberates nor promotes the greater good.

The cost of loyalty to Zionism also includes the price paid for racism. South African Christians who lived through apartheid

and travel to Palestine, for example, are shocked to discover that their impressions of Israel were uninformed, naïve or misled. The Deputy General Secretary of the Council of African Independent Churches (Ngcana 2017) expressed his horror after a visit to Palestine with the South African Council of Churches (SACC) as follows:

The church leadership found Israeli abuses of Palestinian human rights to be appalling! Israel has mastered well from the South African apartheid regime and actually surpassed its architect, Hendrik Verwoerd, through its design and application! [...] Question is, how much holy does the Holy Land still possess? (Ngcana, 11 July 2017)

Yet, many Christians argue that Israel does not have an apartheid regime because of the many differences with South African apartheid. Indeed, the two contexts differ. However, international law, not the South African case, defines what constitutes apartheid. In the past decades, several reports have named Israel as an apartheid regime. More recently, the systematic, evidence-based analysis of Amnesty International (2022), Human Rights Watch (2021) and the Israeli human rights body, B'Tselem (2021), made it very clear that Israel practises widespread apartheid, as defined in international law, in Israel and in Palestine. It is unimaginable that African Christians foster theological views that sanction colonialism and apartheid, and yet this is the reality. This situation is unbearable. The cost for doing so also puts the integrity of Christianity at stake.

### The integrity of Christianity?

Worldwide, Christian supporters of Zionist myths and legends cultivate empathy for the State of Israel and its systematic transgressions of human rights at the cost of the Palestinians (Braverman 2010:24–25; Raheb 2014:24–31; Stanley 2015:105). That many – if not most – Christians in Africa do not distinguish between the biblical people of Israel and the modern State of Israel was evident at the 26th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). The representatives of over 80 million Christians from all over the world who gathered in 2017, in Leipzig, included delegates of member churches from 34 African countries.

In plenary and other discussions, most of the African delegates spoke of the biblical Israel and the modern State as if they are one and the same entity. Yet, neither an in-depth historical study of the region nor critical analyses of land promises in the Bible, by Spangenberg and Van der Westhuizen (2018), yield any evidence of the exact borders of the so-called Promised Land. Muslim groups reigned for over 1400 years. Israelites, Jews and Israelis, in contrast, controlled the region for approximately 500 years. In short, Zionist claims of sole rights to the territory currently known as Israel and Palestine cannot be validated. Arguments that Israel has all the right to all the land for religious or historical reasons are ungrounded and mask its neo-colonial advancement of 'Western white geopolitical control over the Middle East' (Spangenberg & Van der Westhuizen 2018:3). The idea of one pure Jewish race is also untenable. The myth

of a homogenous Jewish people that has existed for 4000 years ignores conversions, migrations, marriages and other forms of integration. As Sand (2010:319) states, no scientific study with anonymous DNA samples has ever identified 'a genetic marker specific to Jews, and it is not likely that any study ever will'. According to historical evidence, most modern Jews descend from converts whose native lands were spread across the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and concepts such as Eretz Israel and *aliyah* are ideological constructs that promote Zionist imperialism (Sand 2010:14–18). To embrace these claims is to reject contextual theology and the inclusive spirituality of the Gospel, turning the Bible into a book of secular history fixed into time and space to elevate and privilege Jews over all others. It also ignores the non-hierarchical, cosmic bond between all people, opposing Palestinian and other Christians' beliefs in a compassionate God who values all human beings equally, and sidesteps ecclesial and personal responsibilities to act prophetically in times of injustice.

Resolution 55 of the 26th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (2017:19) affirms that:

[W]ith respect to the situation of injustice and suffering that exists in Palestine, and the cry of the Palestinian Christian community, the integrity of Christian faith and praxis is at stake. (29 June 2007)

It specified six action steps, including instructing the WCRC Secretariat to initiate a study and discernment programme to educate Christians on the matter. It further encouraged churches to evaluate their 'mission, education and investment relationships with Israel and Palestine in light of the witness of Palestinian Christians' and to respond on the basis of the Reformed Communion's duty to honour universal human rights. In recognising the need to listen to, and interact with Palestinian Christians, the General Council asked its Executive Committee, with help from member churches, to promote and enable visits to Palestinian Christians to witness their reality, and to find ways to actively help them in their struggle for freedom.

While this resolution was adopted unanimously by a show of colour-coded cards from the delegates at their respective tables, most delegates from Africa (with the notable exception of the South Africans) abstained from voting. However, South African clergy who made valuable contributions in the debates and voted in favour, revealed in private discussions that many, if not most Christians in their own denominations, and in the rest of South Africa, confuse the biblical Israel with the modern state and conflate the Israelites of the Bible with contemporary Jews.

Indeed, on many occasions the author has listened to South African Christians who accept that the fulfilment of Biblical prophecies means that contemporary Jews should return to the State of Israel. God, they believe, has a special plan for Jews, and because this path is ordained by God, Christians may not judge it. This literalist, causal logic is underpinned

by the myth of Jews as a homogenous people and the notion that the State of Israel is a God-ordained country that requires special treatment. Worldwide, these and other tenets of Christian Zionism are held along a wide spectrum of Protestants, from progressive to the most conservative (Ateek 2008:79–81). Many Christians who do not associate with apocalyptic Zionism, also associate with Zionist myths. Many, unknowingly, strengthen the dangerous ethos of discrimination that violates the core Christian message that all human beings, created in the image of God, are equally worthy.

Palestinian Christians have called for help to the world's Christians since December 2009 when they launched what is generally known as the Kairos Palestine Document. *A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering* (Kairos Palestine 2009), was inspired by the South African Kairos Document of 1985 (South African History Online). This liberation theology of the Palestinians, in turn, instigated the revival of a prophetic Kairos movement in South Africa early in 2011, and later also in Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and on other continents. All these movements respond to struggles in their own contexts and to the crisis of Palestine and Israel. In Africa, the respective groups consist of individuals from different denominations who contribute on an ad hoc, voluntary basis. In South Africa, the SACC has also played a leading role in sensitising member churches. Through the years, the South African Kairos movement has contributed to workshops and conferences offered by the SACC, and accompanied church leaders to Israel and Palestine. Some South African churches including the Anglican Church, the United Congregational Church, the Uniting Reformed Church and the Methodist Church have indeed issued statements in support of a just peace for Palestinians, but most member churches of the SACC have not and this matter will be addressed in a forthcoming article. For now it is necessary to highlight that it is time to critically assess the cost of loyalty – whether in action or through apathy – to Zionism. Christian support for Zionism cannot be morally justified. Is it not necessary for Christians from Africa – clergy, scholars, teachers, church members – to familiarise themselves with the reality, to discern, and to review hermeneutical approaches that conflate the biblical Israel with the modern State or inform theologies of double standards? Is it not time to study, and to respond to the liberation theology in *A Moment of Truth: A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering* (Kairos Palestine 2009)?

## Conclusion

Zionism is not limited to the geopolitical entities of Israel and Palestine. Nor is it simply a matter of systemic racial discrimination against Arabs or an attempt to create a haven for Jews. As a project of neo-colonialism, Zionism transcends the borders of Israel-Palestine into other realms, including Africa and its churches. Many countries may foster ties with

others to pursue their agendas on the international stage, but the State of Israel may be the only national entity today to have infiltrated Christian beliefs for more than seven decades to rationalise gross human rights violations. To accept Israel's development aid, trade deals and military agreements without regard of the cost of doing so, normalises the systematic oppression of the Palestinians. It also violates the continent's spirituality that seeks authentic interpersonal, communal, religious and material well-being. The gains of partnerships with a state that occupies and oppresses another people return the shackles of slavery and the clamps of colonialism through a religious endorsement of neo-imperialism and apartheid. It is as if Christ is crucified again – this time in Africa.

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The author declares that no financial or personal relationships inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

## Author's contributions

M.M., is the sole author and fully responsible for the conceptualisation, research, analysis, writing and editing.

## Ethical considerations

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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