

# The Sky Is Raining Iron: “If Christ were Born Today, he would be Born under the Rubble”

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Global Research, December 27, 2023

[Common Dreams](#) 26 December 2023

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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*Given the unholy dissonance, Bethlehem’s usual celebration of the birth of a Palestinian Prince of Peace was cancelled this year as Gaza endured – and an indifferent West watched – genocide unfold beneath pitiless Israeli airstrikes. Along with a “Liturgy of Lament,” the Rev. Munther Isaac created a nativity scene for the times: Baby Jesus lying amidst the rubble. Meanwhile, rescue workers still struggle to dig, pull, save children from it. Peace on earth, indeed.*

Now more than ever, “one of the most intense civilian punishment [campaigns](#) in history” has leveled Gaza to a hellscape where, per Doctors Without Borders, “no one and nowhere is safe.”

Over the holiday weekend, 90 people were [killed](#) in strikes on Gaza City, including 76 members of one extended family and a longtime UN [official](#) alongside his wife and five children, and a “Christmas Eve massacre” saw over 100 [killed](#) in Khan Younis, Bureij refugee camp and Al-Maghazi refugee camp, about half women and children. In a genocidal crusade where “everything is intentional,” such collateral damage is no concern to Netanyahu; after griping critics are “unjustly blaming Israelis for these casualties,” he proclaimed, “We have no choice (but) to continue to fight... We are not stopping.”

Appalled by the ongoing carnage, Bethlehem officials [cancelled](#) traditional Christmas celebrations in the presumed place of Jesus’ birth. At the Church of the Nativity, a searing sculpture [depicts](#) a bombed-out version of the nativity scene with debris, barbed wire, and angels representing the souls of too many murdered Palestinian children. At the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rev. Munther Isaac set up a creche with baby Jesus in a Palestinian keffiyeh – “A Jewish [infant](#). A homeless infant. A refugee infant” – lying in the concrete remains of a building.

"We are angry. We are broken. This is an annihilation," he said in his sermon, [Christ in the Rubble: A Liturgy of Lament](#). "If Christ were born today, he would be born under the rubble. This is where we find God right now."

Honoring a Jesus "born among the occupied and marginalized...in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness," Isaac also [blasted](#) the hypocrisy of a Western world that "sent us bombs whilst celebrating Christmas."

"They sing about the Prince of Peace in their land, while playing the drum of war in our land," he said. "Your charity, your words of shock *after* the genocide won't make any difference. Words of regret will not suffice...I want you to look at the mirror (and) ask: Where was I?"

*The Intercept* echoes him, wishing us "Merry Christmas!" while [noting](#) that, "in any just universe," we should all be imprisoned at the Hague for our failure to act on ills from the "junkyard of the U.S. war on terror" to "the Palestinian nightmare." Hillel the Elder: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow."

In Gaza, for now, 14,000 rescue workers making up civil defense teams across the enclave daily [toil](#) to save lives in an apocalyptic landscape where, "Everyone is a target." "I cannot sleep," says Ibrahim Musa, 27. "I am constantly haunted by the voices and screams of people under the rubble as they beg us to pull them out. These are our children, our siblings, our families whom we are saving." After each airstrike, they arrive at the scene and quickly try to determine what lies under the tangle of wire and concrete: "We scream until someone hears us." Often, as they begin to dig, they must calm children trapped beneath, asking about their families: "We sometimes lie and tell them everyone is okay so they don't go into shock...This is our work."

At a bombing in southern Al-Qarara, Ahmed Abu Khudair [recalls](#) hearing moaning, starting to dig, finding "two stuck legs." He frees a 12-year-old girl named Aisha, who says eight members of her family are buried there with several other families, including nine children. But without equipment, they cannot reach them. This is their ultimate horror: "Leaving a place knowing there are people alive under the rubble, but you cannot do anything for them." From poet Nasser Rabah:

"When I return from the war, if I do/don't look into my eyes/do not see what I saw...If war knew/that it made good poets/it would shoot itself."

Yet life goes on. In this world, we wish you a holiday season of peace, joy, family, compassion and no savage military incursions. We are unfairly blessed.

Explaining our Christmas manger on the rubble. "If Jesus were born today, he would be born in Gaza under the rubble." Christmas in Bethlehem  
[pic.twitter.com/qGeqj29HiC](https://pic.twitter.com/qGeqj29HiC)

— Munther Isaac منذر اسحق (@MuntherIsaac) [December 7, 2023](#)

The children of Gaza who are seeking refuge in the Catholic Church praying this morning. The sound of bombing can be heard in the beginning, but they

continue their prayer. Resilience. We pray for and with all the children of Gaza  
[pic.twitter.com/0GrxVPr05z](https://pic.twitter.com/0GrxVPr05z)

— Munther Isaac منذر اسحق (@MuntherIsaac) [October 29, 2023](#)

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