



Christians gather around beleaguered Israel

By Jerusalem Newswire Editorial Staff
October 4th, 2004

JERUSALEM - Thousands of Christian Zionists gathered opposite the Knesset in Jerusalem Sunday to stand with the nation of Israel during these trying times, and let the Jewish people know their God is with them.

Top evangelical leaders and several Israeli government officials friendly with the Christian world attended the first annual International Day of Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem.

While the event brought a moral boost to many Israelis, and prompted an outburst of vocal Christian support for the Jewish state, it largely sidestepped the region's current top flashpoint – the Gaza Strip and efforts to uproot the Jews living there.

A group of visitors traveling under the banner of the International Christian Zionist Center decided, however, to make physically standing with the Gaza's Jews the grand finale and focal point of their trip.

Day of Prayer

Held in the Wohl Rose Garden just outside the grounds of the Israeli Knesset, the Day of Prayer saw nearly 2,000 Christian come together in open support of the Jews and their sovereignty over a united Jerusalem.

For two hours, evangelical Christian leaders, Jewish rabbis and Israeli government officials spoke to the gathering about the importance of Christian support for Israel and led the attendees in prayers for the safety of the nation.

This year, the Day of Prayer coincided with the annual Christian Feast of Tabernacles celebration, during which thousands of evangelical Christians pour into Israel to mark the biblical harvest festival of Sukkot with the Jews.

The prophet Zechariah tells how in the days to come the gentile nations will be required by God to send representatives to Israel for Sukkot (Zechariah 14:16). Many bible-centered Christians believe the time to begin fulfilling that mandate is now.

Sidestepping Gaza

Despite the refreshing show of support it offered Israel as a whole, Sunday's event seemed to avoid taking a firm stand in support of the right of the Jewish people to settle the entirety of their biblical heritage.

The issue of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's efforts to uproot the Jewish community in the Gaza Strip was noticeably missing from the agenda.

Keynote speaker Dr. Pat Robertson alluded to the reason for this seeming oversight a day later when he told reporters, "It is unwise for a visitor from America to get involved in Israeli politics."

Robertson said that while Jerusalem and its unity under Israeli sovereignty was a central issue for evangelicals, most simply "do not know" about Gaza and the plight of its Jewish residents.

Supporting Gaza's Jews

But one group of Christian visitors decided to make standing with the Jews of Gaza and their right to settle the coastal strip the highlight of their visit to Israel.

Under the leadership of International Christian Zionist Center (ICZC) director Jan Willem van der Hoeven, some 100 Christians will make their way to Gaza's Katif Bloc Wednesday to physically join hands in solidarity with the Jews living there.

Van der Hoeven believes that Gaza – where Jews are again facing eviction from their promised land – and Jerusalem's Temple Mount – site of Messiah's future throne room – should be the focus of Christian support for Israel.