

I understand the words “Never Again” more now than ever. The past four days have been mind-blowing and heart wrenching. This horrific and heinous attack on Israel and the Jewish people is without question a moment that will be remembered and mourned for generations. So far, close to 1,000 people murdered and thousands more terribly wounded. Women raped and paraded naked publicly, many children killed, grandparents taken hostage, and young people who were enjoying music and dancing were completely caught off guard and were brutally slaughtered. Terrorists went into homes and bomb shelters then heartlessly used Israeli citizens as targets. What blows me away is the fact that I was scheduled to be in Israel for my eighth trip to the Holy Land October 3rd – 11th, but my trip was moved to the end of the month due to my dad having a stroke.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said ‘In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.’ Standing up, speaking up and showing up is the absolute right thing to do, especially for people we call friends. When there are atrocities in the United States, we often say “thoughts and prayers” are not enough, and that same truth applies right now. I remember September 11th and how after experiencing such a non-provoked attack, our entire country rallied and unified against terrorism. Make no mistake about it, this war that has been declared is not against the Palestinian people, it is against Hamas, a terrorist organization that will now cause innocent Palestinians to suffer in Gaza beyond what has been experienced or ever imagined.

During my seven trips to Israel, I have had the privilege to get a glimpse of this beautiful country, geographically, archeologically, economically, agriculturally, militarily, and spiritually. I learned that this very special place is Holy for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Many would like the world to believe this specific conflict is between these two groups of people who are both victims to the inhumane behaviors of Hamas, a terrorist group. As Christians, it is very well possible to grieve for both and it is essential that we pray for both. We are responsible to speak out against any injustices, atrocities or violence perpetrated on all humanity. Unimaginable numbers of Israelis and Palestinians are now victims due to this unprovoked and clearly previously planned attack.

Today, I along with twenty other African Americans from **Bright Star Church Chicago** (Bronzeville) & **St. James Church Chicago** (West Pullman/Roseland) along with staffers

from **Bright Star Community Outreach - BSCO** attended a solidarity event for the JUF in Glencoe, Illinois. We don't have to agree with the policies of the Israeli government to stand against terrorism. We don't have to fully understand the Palestinian plight to stand against terrorism. We don't have to feel compelled to 'choose a side' due to social media pressures and propaganda that lacks historical or biblical context; just speak out against terrorism. I believe standing with Israel against all terrorism is a moral and spiritual responsibility. Matter fact, my faith demands it. I often say our communities are #BetterTogether, and for me, those cannot just be words void of action.

Psalm 122:6-8 declares *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7 Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."* We pray for all of the victims, their families, and maintain hope that those taken hostage will be returned to their families safely. We also pray for the leadership of governments around the world who carry the unimaginable weight of establishing sustained peace in the region and around the globe. Am Yisrael Chai.

"Doing What I Can; While I Can; With What I Have; Within HIS Will."

Pastor Chris Harris