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Why US Evangelicals who support Israel should also back Ukraine

By [Gary Marx and Timothy Head](#), Op-ed contributor | Wednesday, May 15, 2024



St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery is a functioning monastery in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. Originally built in the Middle Ages, the monastery comprises the Cathedral itself, the Refectory of St. John the Divine, built in 1713 and the monastery's bell tower, which was added circa 1716-1719. The original cathedral was demolished under the Stalin regime in the 1930s, but was reconstructed and opened in 1999 following Ukrainian independence in 1991. | Getty Image

the Kremlin's narrative of the war in Ukraine, and Vladimir Putin would like every American Evangelical to believe it.

For decades, American Evangelicals have been some of Israel's staunchest supporters. Regardless of what else demands America's attention, if Israel finds itself in a crisis, American Evangelicals know that supporting the Holy Land is non-negotiable; they rightly see it as a spiritual and moral imperative. But when it comes to U.S. aid for Ukraine, the same cannot be said.

The narrative floating around in some American Evangelical circles today regarding Russia's attack on Ukraine goes something like this: "Putin is a defender of conservative Christian values, Ukraine is a leftist, progressive society, and Russia has every right to fight that influence on their culture."

Calling Vladimir Putin a defender of conservative Christian values is like calling Hamas a noble group of freedom fighters defending themselves against oppression. It's measurably and blatantly false, but it's



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Today, Russia is striking Ukraine with the same Iranian drones that Hamas is using to strike Israel. Russia has weaponized the Christian religion to create its own Kremlin-controlled, corrupted version of Orthodox Christianity just like Hamas has weaponized a corrupted version of Islam to legitimize the indiscriminate murder of Jewish people. The situations in Ukraine and Israel are far from identical, but the fact of the matter is, in both places, people are being persecuted for their faith by violent maniacs who want to exterminate them. Even House Speaker Johnson has acknowledged that we're witnessing the formation of a new "axis of evil."

Seven years ago, Putin's Russia enacted a law criminalizing Christian evangelism. The Russian constitution still guarantees citizens the right to profess their faith, but the 2016 law outlaws "missionary activities" outside of churches. Jesus instructed his disciples to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel," but in Russia, Christians who spread the Gospel are routinely fined and imprisoned. Protestants who share the story of salvation are often blacklisted by state security services, and subsequently unable to find employment or gain admission to school.

Ukraine, in stark contrast, has been called the Bible Belt of Eastern Europe. As soon as the country restored its independence in 1991, Ukrainian Evangelicals began establishing thousands of churches, seminaries, summer camps, and Bible schools, training missionaries to spread the gospel all over the world. In Ukraine, Christians of all denominations are free to host prayer groups, study the Bible, and spread the Gospel without fear, all while fighting the same cultural battles as American Evangelicals — they are speaking God's truth, for example, about abortion, divorce, and the pernicious impact of gender ideology. Ukrainian Evangelicals, in essence, live in a country that looks much more like America than many American Evangelicals realize.



Vladimir Putin's forces, meanwhile, are destroying Christian churches, threatening the faithful, and arresting Evangelical pastors. The mounting evidence of these modern martyrs getting bound and gagged, dragged off in the middle of the night, tortured, and killed for their faith is impossible to ignore. The only churches that are spared are the few Ukrainian Orthodox

churches that have chosen to remain closely allied with the Kremlin-controlled Russian Orthodox Church. Priests in those churches are refusing to bury dead Ukrainian soldiers. UOC priests are also following Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, who has declared Russia's attack on Ukraine to be a "Holy War," and promised Russian soldiers absolution for their sins if they perish in Ukraine. In response, Orthodox Congregations are now voting to leave the Moscow Patriarchate in droves, to become truly Ukrainian Orthodox.

Tyrants always persecute the followers of any religions they cannot control, and Vladimir Putin is persecuting Evangelicals for the same reason — he perceives religious pluralism to be a threat to his totalitarian power.

Today, the dividing line between good and evil in our world is very clear: on the one side, Hamas, the Taliban, Russia, North Korea, China, and Iran; on the other side, the U.S., Israel, Japan, Taiwan, Ukraine, and the countries of Western Europe. As American Evangelicals, we cannot allow ourselves to be tricked into indifference or distracted by politics when moral imperatives arise.

The people of Israel need our prayers and support just as much as Ukrainian Evangelicals do. Please join us in praying for miracles and peace in both Israel and Ukraine.

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