

South African Chief Rabbi Goldstein to Pope Francis: “Repent for Sins against Israel,” Dec 19, 2023.

Transcribed from You-Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVijgOsjLxo>

In a widely reported conversation with Israel’s President Isaac Herzog, the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, chastised Israel’s war on Hamas saying it is “forbidden to respond to terror with terror”.

In comparing Israel’s just war of self-defense to the barbarism of Hamas, Pope Francis repeats the sins of Pope Pius the XII, from the Nazi era, of surreptitiously supporting the forces of evil who seek to annihilate the Jewish people.

And betrays his fiduciary duty as the head of the Catholic Church to protect Christians throughout the world from the same murderous hatred directed against the Jews, not realizing that we are in this war together.

I’m Warren Goldstein, the Chief Rabbi of South Africa, and here is why I say that.

If Israel's war is not just then there has never been a just war. In a Wall Street Journal opinion piece David Rivkin and Peter Berkovitz with decades of experience in statecraft between them including serving in senior national security positions in multiple United States administrations accused the pope of primitive pacifism by pointing out that his views as expressed to President Herzog and repeated in other public fora contradict the basic principles of a Just War articulated in the 4th Century by one of the founding philosophers of Christianity, St. Augustine, who held that a war fought in self-defense, one in which civilians are not targeted, is a Just War.

A comprehensive Just War theory has been developed throughout the generations and now forms the consensus of the civilized world as distilled in modern times in the Geneva conventions.

On this platform in a previous speech, I've set out the facts and arguments that demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that Israel prosecutes this war in terms of all of the conditions of a Just War as prescribed by the accepted international laws of armed conflict. Many experts in this field have likewise done so.

It is a matter of public record that the IDF has done more in this war and previous wars to minimize civilian casualties than any other army in recorded history.

International law accepts unequivocally that even a just war can and inevitably will result in civilian casualties. This does not detract from the awful tragedy of such deaths, as the Talmud teaches that to destroy even one life is to destroy a world. But the very purpose of a just war is to ultimately save lives and prevent worse suffering as Rivkin and Borovitz explain, and I quote: “Acknowledging the sanctity of human life and expressing concern about the harm inevitably caused by a clash of arms, Just War’s principle role is to protect the innocent to the extent possible, a task that pacifism cannot accomplish.”

Primitive pacifism, as they describe the pope's position, actually leads to more suffering and death. If a war in self-defense may not be fought, even within the rule of law, and no civilian casualties are tolerated at all, then the Free World with its respect for law and human rights will ultimately be destroyed by the forces of barbarism.

What would the pope's philosophy of primitive pacifism have said about the war of the Allied Forces to defeat Nazi Germany? Was that a just war? What about all the civilians that died in that war? This reference to World War II is chillingly reminiscent of the current situation. It is common cause that the then head of the Catholic Church Pope Pius XII, who before he began his papacy in 1939 served as the Vatican’s ambassador to Nazi Germany, was at the very least a passive bystander to the Holocaust, if not an active supporter.

Paul Johnson, one of the preeminent historians of our generation, and himself a devout Catholic, puts it like this, and I quote: "Both Catholic and Lutheran antisemitism had contributed over many centuries to the Jew hatred which culminated in Hitlerism. Neither church had behaved well during the war. Pope Pius XII in particular had failed to condemn the final solution, though he knew of it."

Pope Francis, I turn to you and say: God has given you an historic opportunity to atone for the sins of Pope Pius and the Catholic Church during the Holocaust.

Maimonides, one of the great sages of the Jewish people, teaches that repentance is defined as sincere when you are placed in the same situation with the same opportunity to commit the same sin and yet out of remorse you do not. Your church and predecessor stood by while the first Holocaust was perpetrated and now there are forces that seek a second Holocaust.

On numerous occasions, Iran has publicly and proudly stated that it seeks to exterminate Israel. It has shown itself to be the Nazi Germany of today by seeking to destroy Israel through its proxies Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, through its pursuit of nuclear weapons, and through its support of global terrorism against Jews in the diaspora. And yet you have never used your powerful moral voice to condemn Iran for all of this. You have never publicly opposed Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, which we all know it intends to use to exterminate Israel.

Pope Francis, to repent on behalf of the Catholic Church you must not stand by as a passive bystander like Pope Pius did during the first Holocaust, while Iran seeks to perpetrate a second one. And one of the ways that Iran seeks to exterminate Israel is through its proxy army, Hamas. Now is the time for you to lend your moral support to Israel's just war to defeat Hamas. If Israel cannot wage a just war within the accepted international laws of armed conflict, then it will be destroyed, and its more than 7 million Jews will, God forbid, be murdered like the world saw only too graphically on October 7. By denying Israel the moral right to fight this war by comparing its just war of self-defense to the barbarism of Hamas, you repeat the sins of Pope Pius XII, surreptitiously colluding with the forces of evil who seek to annihilate the Jewish people.

And you betray your fiduciary duty as the head of the Catholic Church, which on the most basic level is to protect Christians throughout the world from persecution due to their faith. The same forces led by Iran that seek Israel's destruction, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, are the ideological brothers-in-arms with the global jihadist movement, which on the African continent takes the form of Al-Shebab, Isis, Boko Haram, and others who are waging a savage war of murder, kidnapping, rape, and mutilation on Christians. Last year on the African continent almost 8,000 Christians were murdered for their faith by jihadists. In sub-Saharan Africa there were more victims of jihadist terror than in South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa combined. And in West Africa alone, this year there have been so far 1,800 terrorist attacks resulting in the deaths of more than 4,600 people—all murdered for their Christian faith.

Pope Francis, we are in this together. To the jihadists, Jews and Christians are both the infidels. That is why today the strongest support for Israel in the United States, here in South Africa, and all over the world is coming from Christians who understand this. When you weaken Israel in its war against Hamas you strengthen the hand of the brutal jihadists threatening Christians in Africa and all over the world.

And so, Pope Francis take this time now on the eve of New Year to reflect on how you can repent for the sins of Pope Pius during the Holocaust and how you can protect your congregations all over the world today. May God guide you to the path of atonement for sins past and present, so that our world can become a safer place for all.