

Leader of Iranian Jews:

Israel's massacre of Gazans unjustifiable

Jews had a peaceful life in Al-Quds before Zionism

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Is the regime of Israel the representative of Jews worldwide? What is the connection between Israel's performance and the teachings of Judaism? How do Jews opposed to Zionism think of Israeli crimes in Gaza? What solutions do peace-seeking Jews and those opposed to Zionism support to end the war and oppression against the Palestinians? These are the questions Iran Daily has posed to Younes Hamami Lalehzar, the leader of the Jews in Iran. The 56-year-old chief rabbi of the Jewish community in Iran, in addition to his religious studies, has also studied medicine inside the country. In an interview with Iran Daily, he sees Zionism as different from Judaism and believes that holding a free and inclusive election and forming a unified government in all occupied territories and Palestine could be an acceptable solution to end war and occupation.



● ALI HASANPOUR/IRAN DAILY

The Israeli regime claims to be the government or representative of Jews worldwide. How accurate do you think this statement is?

The governing regime in Israel, namely, the Zionist regime, is derived from the perspectives of the "Zionist movement" that took shape in the late 19th century. Following nationalist movements emerging in Europe, a nationalist movement among some Jews, known as Zionist nationalism, formed, representing a purely political movement. According to Jewish beliefs, the Torah promises the Holy Land to the descendants of Abraham, his son Isaac, and subsequently to the descendants of Isaac and Jacob. When Moses leads the Israelites in rebellion against the oppression of the Pharaoh in Egypt, he guides them toward the Promised Land (Bayt al-Maqdis). After Moses's death, they establish governance in the Holy Land under his successor, Joshua, the most famous of which is the rule of the prophets David and Solomon. Solomon builds the Solomon's Temple (also known as the First Temple) in Jerusalem or Al-Quds. According to Jewish beliefs, during the time of the promised Messiah, all Jews will gather in the Holy Land. Over the more than 2000 years since the destruction of Solomon's Temple by the Romans, Jews have hoped and anticipated a return to Jerusalem or the Promised Land. However, they have never taken practical steps themselves to conquer Al-Quds or establish a government. Zionism, however, uses this Jewish aspiration and employs "the end justifies the means" approach, con-

trary to the Torah, to shape the ideology of Zionism for the establishment of a government in the Holy Land. "Zion" means the desire for the place of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

According to a classification of Zion meaning a passion for Jewish holy sites, there are Religious Zionism and Political Zionism. Religious Zionism implies an affinity for the holy sites of the Jews in Jerusalem, much like how Muslims have holy and revered sites. However, they are not inclined to conquer those holy places through war or any means. In contrast, Political Zionism, unlike Religious Zionism, which awaits the appearance of the Messiah, is not waiting for the Messiah's arrival and asserts that they will take control of the Holy Land by any means necessary.

It's important to note that the political regime in Israel is not a religious regime, and only a few significant issues, such as divorce and laws related to halal or forbidden foods, are under the jurisdiction of religious authorities. The legal framework of the Zionist regime is secular. However, since it was founded based on Jewish ideals, it sees itself as the defender of Jews worldwide. This is while the initial opposition to the formation of the Zionist party and the Zionist political ideology came from Jews themselves.

Is Zionism a conventional or secularized form of the Jewish faith, or is it a deviation from Judaism?

Zionists do not claim religious piety; they are a political party. Groups like ISIS claim to be true representatives of Islam. Zionists, however, make no such

claims because fundamentally, they are not a religious movement. Instead, they utilize certain religious elements whenever it serves their interests. For instance, in this regime, there are two types of courts, and in state or government-related courts, judgments are not based on the Torah. A few years ago, there was a dispute where some religious individuals wanted only one verse from the Torah, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one," to be recited in the morning ceremonies at schools. However, the Ministry of Education rejected this, stating that the system is secular. Therefore, Zionists exploit Jewish beliefs whenever it suits their interests.

You mentioned that Jews have not taken any action over the past 2000 years to establish a government and return to the Promised Land. Is this due to the interpretation of religious teachings and the Torah, or is it because of a lack of power and the possibility of forming a government?

Even in circumstances where conditions were favorable, they never took steps to establish a government. The Holy Land has never been completely devoid of Jews throughout history. During a period when the Romans occupied it, they did not allow Jews to stay in the city of Jerusalem. However, during Muslim rule over the Bayt al-Maqdis, Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived together, and until the establishment of the Zionist regime in 1948, they coexisted. Given the numerous shared beliefs and jurispru-

dential aspects between Judaism and Islam, the anti-Jewish sentiments, primarily found in Western and Christian countries, were absent in Islamic countries. Many Muslim scholars have been defenders of the rights of religious minorities. This peaceful coexistence has been disrupted since the establishment of the Zionist regime. Even groups of Jews residing in the Bayt al-Maqdis refused to obtain Israeli citizenship and identification cards, leading many of these dissenters to migrate from occupied territories.

According to Jewish beliefs, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem requires certain prerequisites and necessities that are dependent on the advent of the promised Messiah. Therefore, in periods when conditions were somewhat favorable, they took no action to form a government. For example, about 800 years ago, when the Fatimids ruled this land, a prominent Jewish figure named "Moses ben Maimon" had significant power, influence, and authority in the Fatimid court. However, he never chose to reside in the Bayt al-Maqdis or use his power and authority in Jerusalem.

In the Jewish faith, like other religions, there are likely different sects and inclinations. What does the religious statement that Jews or the Children of Israel are the chosen people or a superior race mean? In the third chapter of the book of Amos, God addresses Amos, saying, "You alone have I chosen from all the families of the earth."