

Bethlehem church creates rubble Nativity scene to draw attention to Gaza genocide

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“This is what Christmas looks like in Palestine.” A church in the occupied West Bank has changed this year’s nativity scene, laying baby Jesus in the rubble, to show solidarity with the people of Gaza.

Bethlehem, December 6 (RHC)-- A church in Bethlehem has decided to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ differently this year, symbolising the suffering of children in Gaza amid Israel's ongoing indiscriminate war of aggression against the Palestinian people.

As Christmas this year approaches amid Israel’s brutal onslaught on the Palestinian enclave, the Nativity scene at the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church shows a toy baby wrapped in the traditional Palestinian keffiyeh and placed in debris and rubble.

While the keffiyeh symbolises Palestinian identity, history, and struggle, the debris represents destruction in Gaza, where over 16,000 people have been killed by Israel’s barbaric bombings, most of them children and women.

The toy baby meant to be Jesus represents the thousands of children buried beneath the rubble in Gaza.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency, the church’s pastor, Reverend Doctor Munther Isaac, said it was difficult to celebrate Christmas while people were being killed in Gaza. "We cannot celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ this year in any way. We don't feel like celebrating," he said, calling Israel’s bombardment a genocide.

"Unfortunately, Christmas in Palestine is like this. Whether Christian or Muslim, this is the situation we are going through in Palestine," he said in a message to churches around the world.

A number of municipalities and churches in Bethlehem and Ramallah announced last month that Christmas celebrations would be cancelled in the occupied West Bank in solidarity with Gaza. Bishops of Christian churches in Jerusalem called on all Christian parishes to restrict celebrations and instead collect donations for Gaza’s victims.

Bethlehem is believed to be the birthplace of Jesus. Thousands flock to the West Bank city every year to celebrate his birth.

While Western Christian churches celebrate Christmas on December 25, Orthodox churches and other Christian denominations observe the holiday in January. Only a small number of Palestinian Christians remain in Gaza and the West Bank today, leaving due to Israeli occupation, siege and economic hardship.

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