# Pope Francis’s legacy amid global conflict and complex political reactions



The recent passing of Pope Francis has sparked a wide array of reactions, highlighting the complexities of his legacy amid ongoing global conflicts. As leaders and media outlets issued statements of praise, some observers have pointed to a disconnect between these recognitions and the realities of the issues the pope highlighted during his tenure.

Keir Starmer, the UK Prime Minister, described Pope Francis as “a pope for the poor, the downtrodden and the forgotten.” Joe Biden, President of the United States, commended the late pontiff for promoting “an end to … suffering across the globe.” Yet critics underscore that these leaders also have policies or roles that seemingly contradict the causes Pope Francis championed. For example, Starmer’s government has been criticised for cutting winter fuel payments to vulnerable pensioners and policies predicted to push many into poverty, while Biden’s administration has supported Israeli military actions in Gaza.

Pope Francis’s focus on Gaza was a notable element in his later years. In his final Easter address, he condemned the “death and destruction” and highlighted the “dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation” there—a message that received limited coverage in Western media. The late pope referred to the situation in Gaza as terrorism rather than war and reaffirmed his support for Palestinian statehood in his last published article, advocating that “Peace-making requires courage, much more so than warfare.”

In private acts of solidarity, Pope Francis reportedly called Gaza’s only Catholic church daily to offer prayers and support, concerned about the potential erasure of a Christian community with roots in the region extending back over 1,600 years. Despite this, Western responses to attacks on Christian sites in Gaza, such as the bombing of Saint Porphyrius church, the recent strike on the Anglican al-Ahli Arab Baptist hospital, and the tragic deaths of Christians in the Holy Family church, have been muted. The Holy Family church community, which the pope supported personally, suffered a military attack on its associated school in July 2023.

Britain’s role in these events has also been scrutinised, particularly for supplying components to F-35 jets used in strikes on Gaza. Pope Francis, in his final writings, cautioned that the ongoing violence could fit the characteristics of genocide. Meanwhile, the UK government has refrained from labelling any Israeli actions as war crimes, even rebuking Foreign Secretary David Lammy when he suggested Israel had violated international law.

The discourse around the death of public figures often reflects broader political tensions. As The Guardian observes, some figures’ legacies become polarising, while others are subject to sanitisation that overlooks their dissenting views. Figures like Nelson Mandela, who linked the freedom of Palestinians to broader liberation struggles, have had aspects of their positions minimised after death.

Distinct from the often cautious or politically correct responses, some public comments have been starkly controversial. US far-right politician Marjorie Taylor Greene, for example, tweeted cryptic remarks implying the defeat of evil with a divine hand, a comment The Guardian describes as “astonishingly offensive” in the context of Pope Francis’s legacy.

Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis confronted harsh challenges, including opposing what he called “unbridled capitalism” and “new colonialism.” He held complex and sometimes contradictory views, such as advocating for greater acceptance of LGBTQ+ people while condemning “gender ideology” as a significant danger. His leadership was not democratically accountable, and his persona remains a mixture of progressive steps and conservative stances. Furthermore, longstanding critiques of the Catholic Church, such as its handling of child abuse scandals and its stance on contraception during health crises like the HIV/AIDS epidemic, continue to factor into evaluations of his legacy.

What remains clear in analyses reported by The Guardian is that Pope Francis used his position to speak out on some of the most pressing and contentious issues of our time, including the plight of Palestinians and the escalating violence in Gaza. His vocal opposition to what he viewed as grave injustices distinguishes him in a global atmosphere where dissenting voices often face censorship or punishment. The late pope’s calls for peace and justice underscore the enduring significance of his public interventions in global affairs.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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