



Huckabee Angry at Israel Over Christian Visa Process

U.S. ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee is frustrated with Israel's treatment of American Christian organizations that want to visit the Holy Land. In a letter to high-ranking officials, Huckabee threatened to publicly announce that Christians are no longer welcomed in Israel.

Huckabee sent a letter last week to Israeli Interior Minister Moshe Arbel expressing "profound disappointment" over the Israeli government's refusal to approve visas for American Christian groups, some of which had been organizing visits since the founding of the modern Jewish state in 1948. Huckabee is a Zionist Christian pastor who has led numerous such trips himself.



AP Images

Mike Huckabee in the West Bank town of Taybeh

Persistent Problem

Huckabee spoke to Arbel about this problem on May 27. But, it turns out, it has only persisted. In his [recent letter](#), which was leaked to Israeli media, he says that what he hoped would conclude with a "simple resolution" has only gotten worse. The ambassador said that starting this year, Israel began dragging out the visa approval process and harassing evangelical organizations. "They have all been required to fill out extensive questionnaires regarding their religious beliefs, their activities, their assets on Israel, etc.," he said in the letter.

He asked that the process revert to what it was previously before the U.S. embassy has to "publicly announce throughout the United States that the State of Israel is no longer welcoming Christian organizations and their representatives and is instead engaging in harassment and negative treatment toward organizations with long-standing relationships and positive involvement toward Zionism and friendship to the Jewish people." Huckabee added to his threat:

We would further be obligated to warn Christians in America that their generous contributions to organizations to promote goodwill in Israel are being met with hostility and that tourists should reconsider travel until this situation is resolved with clarity.

Moreover, the former Arkansas governor said if this continues, the U.S. may end up blocking visas for Israelis who wish to visit the United States:

Finally, and most regrettably, if the Government of Israel continues to cause the expense and bureaucratic harassment for the granting of routine visas ... I will have no other choice than to instruct our Consular Section to review options for reciprocal treatment of Israeli citizens seeking visas to the United States. Surely this is NOT the relationship the State of Israel wishes to have with its best partner and friend on the planet.



Israel's Response

Arbel [replied](#) the following day. He essentially disputed Huckabee's description of what has been going on. "To the best of my knowledge," Arbel said, "every request that was personally brought to the attention of my office has been addressed within an exceptionally short timeframe." Arbel also wasn't very happy with Huckabee's decision to send the letter of complaint to "a wide range of senior officials." Huckabee had sent the letter to Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, and Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana.

This isn't the first time this issue has emerged. A nearly identical problem arose in 2023, [according](#) to reports. Arbel headed the Ministry of Interior back then as well. Israel stopped issuing Christian clergy visas. It wasn't clear if Arbel or someone else was making the decision. After failing to resolve the problem quietly, the International Christian Embassy, a Christian Zionist group, went public with their complaint. Israel reverted to routine policies and procedures that had been in place for decades. The problem was resolved in the same way Huckabee seeks to have this current issue remedied.

Anti-Christian sentiment in Israel is real, but it's difficult to ascertain if this is part of it.

Anti-Christian Violence

In 2023, violence against Christians in Israel got so bad that Israel's president, Herzog, had to condemn it. He [said](#):

I utterly condemn violence, in all its forms, directed by a small and extreme group, towards the holy places of the Christian faith, and against Christian clergy in Israel. "This includes spitting, and the desecration of graves and churches," he added, noting that the phenomenon has been on the rise.

The Times of Israel cited a number of violent incidences against Christians at the time, including:

- Two soldiers from the Israel Defense Forces' Givati Brigade were detained on suspicion of spitting at the Armenian archbishop and other pilgrims during a procession in the Old City.
- Two Jewish teens were arrested for damaging graves at the Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion.
- The Maronite community center in the northern city of Ma'alot-Tarshiha was vandalized by unknown assailants over the Christmas holiday.
- A gang of religious Jewish teens threw chairs at an Armenian restaurant inside the city's New Gate. Vandalism at the Church of the Flagellation occurred the very next week.
- a resident of southern Israel was arrested after attacking priests with an iron bar at the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Gethsemane

Some inside Israel blamed the growing violence on "the composition of the current Israeli government, which is made up of ultra-Orthodox and extreme-right factions fiercely protective of Israel's Orthodox Jewish character and strongly opposed to public displays of Christian worship," *Times of Israel* said.

Arbel happens to be an ultra-Orthodox rabbi and Knesset Member who is part of the religious Shas political party, causing some to suspect his personal convictions are playing a role in the visa saga.

Former Congressman Matt Gaetz, who hosts a [show](#) on OANN, finished a segment on this story with a conclusion that might resonate with many Americans: "We don't think it's a tenable position for Israel to say to our fellow countrymen: Send us your money, send us your weapons, but don't send us your



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on July 22, 2025

Christian tour groups.”



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