

Pro-'Christian Zionist' Aliyah Strategy

Overview

This thesis examines how the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), a leading Christian Zionist NGO, strategically assists Jewish migration (Aliyah) to Israel and advocates internationally to preserve Israel as a Jewish state. It analyzes theological motivations, operational strategies, public advocacy, and ethical implications within the Israeli-Palestinian context.

Historical Background of Christian Zionism

- Literal Bible reading post-Reformation fostered expectations of Jewish restoration to Palestine.
- Dispensational premillennialism (Darby, Scofield) framed history in divine epochs; Israel central to End Times.
- British restorationism influenced policy (Balfour Declaration, 1917); American evangelicals revived activism post-1967.
- New Christian Right leveraged media and lobbying; Christian Zionist NGOs multiplied and forged Israel ties.
- Critiques target apocalypticism, political influence, and impacts on peace processes.

The ICEJ: Origins, Structure, and Objectives

- Founded in Jerusalem (1980) after Basic Law declared united Jerusalem; response to embassy relocations to Tel Aviv.
- Positions itself as a global "embassy" for pro-Israel Christians; HQ in Jerusalem; 70+ national branches.
- Three-fold mission: educate Christians on God's purposes for Israel; promote reconciliation; support local churches.
- Eight objectives (1993): comfort Israel; interpret events biblically; equip Christians; mobilize prayer/advocacy; aid Aliyah; support projects; build Jewish-Arab bridges.
- Activities: social aid, Aliyah assistance, Feast of Tabernacles (annual mass pilgrimage), Knesset and EU advocacy (CAC, ECI), US lobbying (CIPAC).
- Staff: Executive Director Jürgen Bühler; spokesperson Rev. Malcolm Hedding; PR Director David Parsons; Aliyah Director Howard Flower.

- Denominational profile: evangelical-charismatic leaning; modified dispensationalism (rejects pre-tribulation rapture; downplays temple activism).

Theological Narrative and Motivations

- Bible as pre-written history; covenants central:
 - Abrahamic: land and people promise—everlasting.
 - Mosaic: moral law guiding to Christ.
 - New Covenant: nations included; Israel still elect.
 - Davidic: messianic reign; future millennial kingdom.
- Israel's "triplicate call": birthing, suffering, priestly—Israel as vehicle of redemption.
- Two-phase return: physical Aliyah precedes spiritual renewal (Ezekiel 36–37).
- Dualistic worldview: good vs. evil; conflicts seen theologically; Islam framed as key adversarial ideology in region.
- Gentile role: "Comfort My people" (Isa 40:1); "beckon to the Gentiles" (Isa 49:22); "fishers" before "hunters" (Jer 16:16).

Assisted Migration (Aliyah) Strategies and Effects

- Legal framework: Law of Return (1950; 1970 amendment) grants Jews and many descendants immigration rights.
- ICEJ collaborates with authorized Israeli bodies (Jewish Agency; Shavei Israel) for processing and absorption.
- Tactics:
 - Funding flights ("wings of eagles" framing).
 - "Net fishing": outreach via media, community lists, phone banks to identify eligible Jews.
 - Regional operations: FSU hubs (St. Petersburg, Central Asia, Baltics), Western Europe (France, Germany), North America; support to Bnei Menashe via Shavei Israel.
 - Integration support: absorption programs (Red Carpet, Katef le Katef), homecare for elderly FSU Jews; aid to West Bank settlers.
- Case: Russian Jews
 - "Let My people go" campaign; Finnish Christian networks (Exodus Committee) bused/transited migrants.
 - ICEJ sponsored 50+ flights; extensive outreach in Russia/Germany; limited traction in US (orthodox niche).
- Case: Bnei Menashe (India)

- Viewed as “lost tribe” descendants; Aliyah resumed 2013 with ICEJ-sponsored flights; conversions organized abroad (Nepal).
- Settlement patterns include West Bank; praised as patriotic, IDF-serving community.
- Effects:
 - Contributes to Jewish demographic majority; strengthens Jewish identity; potential political effects via settlement reinforcement.
 - ICEJ claims 115,000+ assisted migrants by 2014; ~\$45M invested.

Advocacy Against De-legitimization

- Methods: media content (magazine, TV/radio, emails), petitions, secular framing in EU/UN/US fora, coalition lobbying (ECI, CIPAC).
- Key issue domains:
 - Apartheid analogy: ICEJ rejects comparison; barrier presented as security measure; Israel framed as regional democracy.
 - Zionism = racism: counters as moral relativism and anti-Semitism; defends Israel’s Jewish character.
 - Two-state recognition and UN bids: opposes unilateralism; warns on borders, Jerusalem, refugees, Hamas-Fatah dynamics.
 - Settlements and borders: cites Mandate/Balfour; disputes “occupation” framing; supports Jewish presence in Judea/Samaria.
 - Iran: campaigned against Ahmadinejad for incitement; highlights nuclear/ideological threats.

Ethical and Theopolitical Debates

- Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism (2006): local church leaders denounce Christian Zionism as theological-political, obstructing peace.
- ICEJ response: asserts covenantal theology, rejects “replacement” theology; denies apocalyptic obsession; claims love for all while affirming Jewish chosenness.
- Colonialism vs. Homecoming:
 - Critics cite settlement aid and selective migration (e.g., Bnei Menashe) as colonizing.
 - ICEJ prioritizes covenantal land claims; leaves “who is a Jew” to Israeli authorities; pragmatic stance to facilitate Aliyah.
- Peace process stance:
 - ICEJ allows that land loss could occur under divine discipline; still opposes two-state outcomes that endanger Jewishness.
 - Frames conflict as theological; employs secular arguments publicly due

to low resonance of biblical claims.

Key Terms & Definitions

- Aliyah: Jewish immigration to Israel; oleh/olim are individual(s) immigrating.
- Eretz Israel: biblically promised land; pragmatically framed between Jordan River and Mediterranean, including disputed territories.
- Dispensational premillennialism: theology dividing history into divine epochs; Christ returns before millennial reign; ICEJ holds a modified form.
- "Fishers and hunters": biblical metaphor (Jer 16:16) for forces prompting Jewish return; ICEJ identifies as "fishers."
- De-legitimization: campaigns portraying Israel as apartheid, racist, or illegal; ICEJ's target in advocacy.

Action Items / Next Steps

- Analyze contemporary ICEJ Aliyah data post-2014 for updated scope and regional shifts.
- Assess measurable impacts of ICEJ/Evangelical advocacy on EU/UN policy positions.
- Examine absorption outcomes: retention rates, socio-economic integration of ICEJ-assisted olim.
- Study Palestinian Christian perspectives on ICEJ activities for interfaith implications.

Selected Structured Details

Entity/Theme	Role/Position	Key Points	Notes
ICEJ	NGO; Christian Zionist "embassy"	Aliyah assistance; advocacy; social aid	Founded 1980; HQ Jerusalem; 70+ branches
Objectives (1993)	Mission pillars	Comfort Israel; educate; mobilize; aid Aliyah; reconciliation	Scripturally anchored (OT/NT)
Theology	Modified dispensationalism	Covenants central; downplays rapture; Israel's elect role	Emphasis on promises over prophecy timetables
Aliyah Partners	Jewish Agency; Shavei Israel	Legal processing; outreach to "lost/hidden" Jews	ICEJ funds, does outreach; no proselytizing
Major Cases	FSU Jews; Bnei Menashe	Flights, "net fishing"; conversion facilitation	Settlement linkages noted for Bnei Menashe
Advocacy Targets	UN/EU/US public spheres	Counter apartheid/racism claims; oppose unilateral PA bids	Secular framing; petitions; lobbies
Critiques	Jerusalem Declaration	Claims of colonialism, perpetual war	ICEJ replies: covenantal theology; humanitarian aid
Impacts (claimed)	115,000+ assisted (by 2014)	~\$45M invested; broad global reach	Demographic and political

effects inferred