

We should not deal with fascists

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As the [Washington Post has reported](#):

On Wednesday at the Pentagon, [Defence Secretary, Pete] [Hegseth prayed](#) for U.S. troops to inflict “overwhelming violence of action against those who deserve no mercy ... We ask these things with bold confidence in the mighty and powerful name of Jesus Christ.”

The Washington Post was shocked. Senior military figures were shocked. Forces' chaplains were shocked. I am shocked. There is no way on earth that Christian faith can be reconciled with this demand for wartime violence. The impression given is that we have returned to the crude belief systems that justified the Crusades.

Perhaps Hesgeth has. Perhaps the whole regime of which he is a part has. But the world has noticed, and to his credit, the US-born Pope has spoken out. As [The Guardian has noted](#):

During a Palm Sunday mass in St Peter's Square, the pope said the conflict between Iran, Israel and the US was “atrocious” and that Jesus could not be used to justify war.

“This is our God: Jesus, king of peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war,” he told tens of thousands of worshippers. “He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them.”

Quoting a Bible passage, Leo added: ““Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood.””

The quote comes [from Isaiah 1:15](#).

The question the Pope implicitly addresses is not just a religious one. It is, of course, ethical as well. As anyone with the slightest understanding of religion knows, faith is a matter of choice. To invoke religious belief as the foundation for universal action, which is what Pete Hesgeth is seeking to do as US Defence Secretary, is, then, preferably dangerous for a number of reasons.

He is at risk of alienating his own troops.

He is at risk of alienating public support for what his regime is seeking to do.

He risks heightening tensions around this conflict by turning it into a religious issue, which can only make its resolution much more difficult.

He risks exposing his own incapacity as a decision-maker by making it clear that the basis for his decisions is not rational but is instead a conviction that many might not share, or even profoundly disagree with, undermining his authority as a leader in the process.

He also reveals that he has not learned the lessons of history: military leaders have long avoided using religious claims as a basis for military action because they know they are divisive at a time when they are seeking unity.

What all of this makes clear is that the Trump regime is exceptional. It has abandoned democracy and the idea of representation and has put in its place the idea of theocracy and an imposed religious view. What is more, when doing so, it has chosen a very narrow interpretation of the Christian faith, with an absolutist view of what that religion might mean. The lens used aligns the interests of wealth, neoliberal capitalism, and exclusionary power with the supposed teachings implicit in the New Testament, when any reasonable reading makes such alignment absolutely impossible.

We are, then, I would suggest, not dealing with anything that might be aligned with Christianity, as the Pope's comments make clear. Instead, we are dealing with a human construct presented as an article of faith to justify a course of action that furthers the interests of a few, based on a quasi-justification that cannot be supported or sustained.

To put it another way, we are looking at fascism, where the alignment of political and religious interests is commonplace, and this is exactly what Hesgeth is doing. The difficulty is that Hesgeth has the power to command troops, and that power is being used to prejudice the interests of not only those troops and the country that they serve, but also the interests of the people in the countries that they are told are their enemies, and the people of the rest of the world.

We are all paying a very high price for the theocratic fascism of Donald Trump's regime in the USA.

The only question I have left to ask is, why are we going out of our way to continue to treat this regime as if it is our ally? Why, for example, is King Charles making a state visit to the country in April this year? When the USA is actively seeking to undermine our well-being, none of this makes sense, and the resulting lack of clarity in UK political leadership is also profoundly harmful at this point in time.

Those who seek high political office who cannot discriminate between what is right and

wrong, and who are unable to properly identify threats, do not have a role to play in public life. Keir Starmer and his cabinet are clearly in this position. Their failure to oppose Trump and his fascism, and to call out its consequences, is perhaps the greatest failure on their record to date, and the reason why so many people in this country have now lost trust in them. It is time for them to go, and for a government to be created that can make clear that in the UK, we do not deal with fascists.