

Ted Cruz decides who the real Christians are and what they believe

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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So [Ted Cruz made quite a scene at the In Defense of Christians gala dinner the other night](#), getting booed off the stage for comments about the relationship between Christians and Israel. The Middle East-focused group invited the Southern Baptist senator to keynote its event, and it's no surprise that these representatives of distinct branches of the Christian tree have some differences. Lauren Markoe [puts it mildly](#):

The episode highlighted a central tension between U.S. evangelicals, who strongly support Israel, and Middle Eastern Christians — including thousands of Palestinian Christians — who hold Israel responsible for expropriated Arab lands and the death toll in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

[Mark Silk is no doubt right](#) that at least some of what Cruz had to say—that violent radicalism in the region threatens Jews as well as Christians—is a legitimate point to make, one Cruz might have chosen to put more diplomatically than "Those who hate Israel hate America." Of course, Cruz wasn't trying to persuade his in-person audience of Middle Eastern Christian leaders ([a powerful political bunch!](#)) to see things his way. He was, as ever, playing to the cameras.

And well, politicians will politick. But the problem is neither that Cruz supports Israel nor that he might want to run for president. It's that he chose to make this splash by insulting his hosts, who were gathered to *try to protect their people from imminent slaughter*. Cruz has been called out for this by, among other people, [quite a few](#) right-of-center folks.

Others have [supported him](#). Most telling was *Breitbart's* decision to [scare-quote the word Christian](#) in a headline about the incident. The nerve these people have, calling themselves Christians even though they don't share all the political views of a (much, much) younger branch of Christianity prominent in a larger and more powerful country! Cruz's comments [implicitly equate Christianity with America](#) (and Judaism with Israel, but I digress). It's an old-school move, and it always reeks of arrogance and a willful ignorance of history.

This time, it reeked as well of an utter lack of respect for a gathering in support of marginal, vulnerable Christians. It was a pretty low move.

(Elsewhere, some small encouraging news: [*Agenzia Fides reports*](#) a move toward increased visas for Chaldean Christians to come to the U.S. as refugees.)