Response to the “Christians for Zion” protest at Greenbelt 2013

On Sunday August 25th, the [Christians for Zion](http://www.christiansforzion.com/) held a demonstration outside [Greenbelt Festival](http://www.greenbelt.org.uk/). For the reasons detailed below, I went out to talk to them as you can see in the a video up they have put on YouTube of the [demo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WwKvlkfQfQ&feature=youtu.be) (about 30 minutes in to save you watching all the boring part). I have tried to put this response in the comments section but it is far too long so I am publishing it here for those interested.

As the person who spoke with Mike Fry at his demonstration outside Greenbelt (about 30 minutes into the film) I would like to clarify why I confronted him and put some of the points I tried to make but was stopped from doing so first by Mike & then by the Greenbelt security team.

Firstly, I should make clear that while I am a long time attendee, volunteer & supporter at Greenbelt, I am not a Christian. I am in fact a Jew & an Israeli. I went out to the demonstration as I wanted to make the point that groups like Christians for Zion far from helping Israel, do damage to Israel’s cause. Also, as a former soldier in the Israel Defence Force, I strongly object to groups such as them trying to tell Israel how it should act from the safety of their homes her in the UK or in the USA. To coin a phrase, they are willing to defend Israel to the last drop of Israeli blood.

As a group parading under the Israeli flag, my flag, I started off by trying to talk to them in Hebrew. As this fell on deaf ears (none of them spoke Hebrew well enough to converse in it) I asked them why they were using the flag of my country to make a political point against Greenbelt. I told them I strongly objected to the use of my flag by groups like theirs. I also asked them why, if they objected to Greenbelt’s position on Israel, didn’t they pay their admission fee like everyone else and come in to the Festival and argue their case. (Greenbelt is an inclusive festival which not only welcomes different point of view but positively encourages them. As one of a number of the non-Christians who regularly come to the Festival, I can vouch for its inclusivity). I also wanted to make the point, as I had at events inside the Festival, that the way forward for both Palestinians & Israelis is to recognise the suffering on both sides and to start to break down barriers (physical & mental) so that they can begin to see each other as people, not just enemies either side of a conflict.

It didn’t take long for Mike Fry to start haranguing me (there is no other word as he did not give me much of a chance to reply) with the usual claptrap that it is only the Palestinians that are at fault and that Israel can do no wrong (and there was I thinking that it was Jesus that said that you had to turn the other check and that blessed are the peacemakers) before I was asked to leave by the security team. None of what he said will help Israel come to terms with its position in a deeply troubled part of the world and, what is worse, will only re-enforce the bunker mentality of the rightwing in Israeli politics that is blocking the much needed moves towards a negotiated peace settlement.

Whilst the pervading attitude within Greenbelt’s organisers is also giving me cause for concerns with it slipping from being just supporting justice for Palestinians into a more anti-Israeli (and anti-Israel’s right to exist) stance, which I also have spoken out against, demonstrations by those who call themselves friends of Israel such as this one at Greenbelt, are not helpful and do much to damage the peace movement inside both Israel & Palestine, something we should all support.