



**WORKING TOGETHER:**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Washington, D.C. - November 13, 2023**

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**CMEP affirms the November 10th statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem**

November 13, 2023  
Washington, D.C.

**Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) affirms the November 10th statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem**, which suggests “foregoing any unnecessarily festive activities” this year as Christians around the world stand in solidarity with those in the Holy Land. We are “standing in support of those continuing to suffer” as we continue to call for a ceasefire to allow immediate and adequate assistance to the citizens of Gaza. Furthermore, we continue to call for an immediate release of the hostages. We affirm their invitation to the faithful “to advocate, pray, and contribute generously,” as CMEP continues to call for people to respond through calling and writing your representatives, gathering on Wednesdays weekly to pray for the Holy Land, and donating to groups doing work in the Holy Land as well as those working towards “a just and lasting peace for our beloved Holy Land.”

See below for the full text of the letter

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## **PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM**

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### **Statement on the Celebration of Advent and Christmas in the Midst of the War**

November 10, 2023

Each year during the sacred seasons of Advent and Christmastide, our Christian communities throughout the Holy Land take great delight in their preparations for the commemoration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In addition to attendance in religious services, these celebrations have normally involved participation in numerous public festivities and the large-scale display of brightly lit and expensive decorations as a means of expressing our joy at the approach and arrival of the Feast of the Nativity.

But these are not normal times. Since the start of the War, there has been an atmosphere of sadness and pain. Thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children, have died or suffered serious injuries. Many more grieve over the loss of their homes, their loved ones, or the uncertain fate of those dear to them. Throughout the region, even more have lost their work and are suffering from serious economic challenges. Yet despite our repeated calls for a humanitarian ceasefire and a de-escalation of violence, the war continues.

Therefore, We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, call upon our congregations to stand strong with those facing such afflictions by this year foregoing any unnecessarily festive activities. We likewise encourage our priests and the faithful to focus more on the spiritual meaning of Christmas in their pastoral activities and liturgical celebrations during this period, with all the focus directed at holding in our thoughts our brothers and sisters affected by this war and its consequences, and with fervent prayers for a just and lasting peace for our beloved Holy Land.

Moreover, during this season of giving, we also invite the faithful to advocate, pray, and contribute generously as they are able for the relief of the victims of this war and for those in dire need, as well as to encourage others to join them in this mission of mercy.

In these ways, we believe, we will be standing in support of those continuing to suffer—just as Christ did with us in his Incarnation, in order that all of God’s children might receive the hope of a New Jerusalem in the presence of the Almighty, where “death shall be no more, neither mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

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*Formed in 1984, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is a coalition of more than 30 national church communions and organizations, including Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical traditions that works to encourage US policies that actively promote a comprehensive resolution to conflicts in the Middle East with a focus on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. CMEP works to mobilize US Christians to embrace a holistic perspective and to be advocates of equality, human rights, security, and justice for Israelis, Palestinians, and all people of the Middle East.*

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## **Recent CMEP Statements and Press Releases:**

**November 13, 2023:** [Letter from Church Based Leaders to President Biden](#). In a November 9, 2023 letter to President Biden, Churches from Middle East Peace (CMEP) and thirty American Church based leaders called on President Biden and his Administration to support an immediate ceasefire, de-escalation, and restraint by all involved.

**November 9, 2023:** [MEDIA ADVISORY FOR VIRTUAL PRESS BRIEFING: IMPLICATIONS OF ARMING THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT](#)

As casualties mount in Israel-Palestine and the U.S. Congress considers a \$14 billion request for additional weapons for Israel, at least one U.S. official has resigned and leading human rights organizations are calling for a halt to arms transfers into the conflict, at times focused on specific weapons systems. Faith groups are also pressing for a change in the U.S. approach. This press briefing is meant to give interested media an update on findings on how weapons are being used in the conflict and the reasons behind these calls. We anticipate that some groups may have new data to share during this briefing. This briefing is for media only.

**November 3, 2023:** [Ceasefire Now! Biden Administration's Response Inadequate to Catastrophe in Gaza](#) The devastating October 7 murder of nearly 1,400 Israelis and internationals by Hamas does not justify the [displacement of 1.5 million people](#), more than sixty percent of the population, in Gaza – many of whom are refugees already; the indiscriminate impact upon civilians by large-scale bombing; the destruction of hospitals, churches, cultural centers, and other infrastructure. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the death toll in Gaza as of November 2 is 9,061, more than 60 percent of whom are women and children. The total number of Palestinian children killed totals 3,760. The mass slaughter of civilians by any party to the conflict is unacceptable and must stop. The lives of all people, be they Israelis or Palestinians, must be protected.

**November 1, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Co-Sponsors: Catholic Pray-in at the White House Calls for President Biden to Support Israel-Hamas Ceasefire](#)**. Washington, DC – On Thursday, November 2 at 12:30 PM, Catholic and other Christian peacemakers will conduct a “pray-in” near Lafayette Park outside the White House to call on President Joe Biden, a Catholic, to abide by Jesus’s way of courageous love and heed Pope Francis’s plea to take the side of peace, and urge all parties to de-escalate hostilities; abide by an immediate ceasefire; and release all hostages.

**October 26, 2023: [End the War Now: Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Fears Catastrophic Deaths of Civilians in Gaza](#)**. The war in Israel and Palestine must be brought to an end. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) calls for an [immediate ceasefire](#), an end to all violence, and a rapid and substantial increase in the delivery of lifesaving aid to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of people in Gaza. CMEP calls on Hamas to release all hostages and do no harm to those still remaining. CMEP also calls on the international community and the United States to stop supporting further militarization and pursue every alternative means to protect all Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

**October 23, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Affirms the October 21st Statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem](#)**. CMEP affirms and echoes the call of The Patriarchs and the Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem’s condemnation of the attack against a sacred place at the Orthodox Church compound of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza on the night of October 19, 2023. CMEP furthermore supports their call upon the international community to immediately enforce protections in Gaza for Sanctuaries of Refuge, such as hospitals, schools, and houses of worship.

See all of our [public statements](#) and [press releases](#).

## Contact Us

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