

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Churches for Middle East Peace Joins Christian Faith Leaders in Writing to Congress in Support of
Palestinian Children and Families Act**

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, joined 24 other Christian Faith leaders in a letter to all members of Congress in support of HR 2590, The Palestinian Children and Families Act. Introduced last year by Rep. Betty McCollum (MN), the legislation would ensure no U.S. taxpayer funds to Israel are used to abuse Palestinian children, demolish Palestinian homes or structures, or annex Palestinian land in the West Bank. The letter also called on a Senator to introduce companion legislation in the Senate.

In the letter, copied in full below, the leaders write, "Congress has a responsibility to ensure that U.S. policy and foreign assistance reflects values that prioritize concern for the rights of the most marginalized and conform with U.S. law. It is incumbent upon Congress to ensure no U.S. taxpayer funds are used by any foreign government, including Israel, in a manner that violates the dignity and wellbeing of any group."

The letter was made public during a virtual event featuring Congresswoman McCollum and Christian faith leaders, including three from Minnesota, on Tuesday, April 26. The video of the event is viewable [here](#).

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April 25, 2022

Dear Members of Congress,

As faith leaders with a deep concern for the Holy Land, we believe Congress must play a proactive role in helping to ensure justice and peace in Israel and Palestine. We welcome the "Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act" (H.R. 2590), which seeks to promote justice, equality, and human rights for Palestinian children and families by prohibiting Israeli authorities from using U.S. taxpayer funds to detain and torture Palestinian children, demolish and seize Palestinian homes, and further annex Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank.

The violations of rights raised in HR 2590 are of grave concern. As documented by numerous human rights organizations, since 2000, an estimated 13,000 Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 17 have been detained, prosecuted, and incarcerated by the Israeli military in the occupied West Bank. Often dragged from their homes in the middle of the night by armed soldiers, they suffer physical and emotional violence and frequently face verbal abuse, humiliation, and intimidation.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we have witnessed how vulnerable communities have experienced more significant challenges with remote working opportunities not present and limited access to vaccinations and

other healthcare options. As Covid-19 began and the West Bank underwent various restrictions to keep the virus contained, Israel continued to demolish Palestinian structures, displacing Palestinian families during a global pandemic. Since the election of U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, [the rate of displacement of Palestinians due to the destruction of Palestinian structures is accelerating](#). [According to data collected by United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#), at the end of February 2022, over 1,300 Palestinians, a majority of whom are children, have been displaced by the demolitions tallied by the U.N. Displacement of Palestinians has persisted throughout the entirety of the pandemic alongside efforts by the Israeli government to annex Palestinian land illegally.

Our faith commitments call us to advocate for the safety and the well-being of the most vulnerable. In our churches and communities across the country, our members are increasingly concerned about the deteriorating conditions for Palestinians who continue to live under a brutal military occupation. We are committed to speaking out until the conditions on the ground contribute to the flourishing of all Palestinian and Israeli lives.

For the United States to play a positive role in fostering justice and peace in Israel/Palestine, Congress cannot ignore the ongoing violations of Palestinian human rights. Therefore, we call on members of the House of Representatives to support HR 2590. We also ask for a Senator to introduce companion legislation in the Senate.

Congress has a responsibility to ensure that U.S. policy and foreign assistance reflect values that prioritize concern for the rights of the most marginalized and conform with U.S. law. It is incumbent upon Congress to ensure no U.S. taxpayer funds are used by any foreign government, including Israel, in a manner that violates the dignity and wellbeing of any group. We thank you for your service and commitment as we work together for justice and peace. Please know we are lifting you in our prayers.

Joyce Ajlouny
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

Rev Eddy Alemán
General Secretary
Reformed Church in America

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian
Ecumenical Director and Diocesan Legate
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

Rev. Marco Cable
President, Division of Overseas Ministries
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Co-Executive
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon
Executive Director
Churches for Middle East Peace

Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe
General Secretary
The United Methodist Church (General Board of Church and Society)

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Reverend Emmett Lafayette Dunn
Executive Secretary-Treasurer/CEO
Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention

Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Very Reverend James Gannon, ofm;
Provincial Minister of the Province of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Susan Gunn
Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Metropolitan Joseph
Antiochian
Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos
Associate General Secretary
National Council of Churches USA

The Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller
President, Provincial Elders' Conference
Moravian Church Northern Province

Bridget Moix
General Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Rev. Teresa Hord Owens
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Richard Santos
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Dr. Andrea Smith
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Rev. Colin P. Watson Sr
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