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A Ceasefire Is the Only Way Forward to Prevent Mass Killing, Further Death, and Destruction

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With the temporary pause in violence having ended, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) condemns the escalating violence in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza that is having devastating effects on civilians. The Biden Administration's reluctance to support a comprehensive ceasefire and its consistent practice of publicly articulating empty rhetoric about the protection of civilians is abhorrent as Israel continues its destructive bombardment on the Gaza Strip and more than 170 have died in the first 24 hours.

In the past days, CMEP welcomed the release of hostages - Israelis and those of other nationalities - and the parallel release of Palestinian prisoners along with the cessation of violence, which allowed desperately needed humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza during a seven-day pause in the fighting. Yet, CMEP also recognized the incomplete and insufficient nature of these measures. Hostages and prisoners are still held, and much more humanitarian relief is required. Only an end to all violence and diplomatic solutions in the context of a comprehensive ceasefire to address core issues will bring about the safety, security, and protection of all Israelis and Palestinians.

As hostilities escalate again, CMEP condemns all violence against civilians. In just the past few days, Israeli soldiers killed two Palestinian children during a raid into a Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. The raid was reportedly the largest since the beginning of the war, with what residents described as including hundreds of Israeli soldiers, and lasted most of the day. As the soldiers withdrew from the camp, they [shot and killed an 8-year-old boy and a 15-year-old boy](#).

[Palestinian gunmen killed 3 Israelis](#) and injured 16 others after opening fire at a bus stop in Jerusalem. The gunmen were shot and killed by off-duty soldiers in the area. Hamas has claimed responsibility for the mass shooting. CMEP condemns the killing of Israeli civilians.

After the temporary ceasefire broke down on December 1, Israel's bombardment resumed, and has already [killed more than 100 people](#) in less than 24 hours. This devastating bombardment comes after Israeli assurances to the United States that it would change how it executed its military campaign in order to better protect civilians. CMEP condemns the Israeli Government's bombing which indiscriminately affects civilians in Gaza and has already caused countless deaths, thousands of whom are children. Adding to our outrage as Christians who deeply value our Scriptures, reports published by [several sources](#) indicate Israel has accelerated its targeting of civilian infrastructure with civilians inside using an artificial intelligence program their military calls "the Gospel." This is anything but "Good News" for civilians in Gaza.

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) calls on the Biden Administration and Congress to shift course and publicly support a comprehensive, bilateral ceasefire that will bring an end to the devastating violence. The continued violence and destruction does nothing to make Israelis or Palestinians safer. The United States government cannot continue to say they oppose the killing of innocent Palestinian civilians while being unwilling to use diplomatic leverage to bring a durable ceasefire to fruition. Further, the pre-October 7 status quo remains unacceptable. The United States must also use its leverage to address the deeper issues at stake so that a comprehensive and lasting peace with justice can be realized. The forced displacement and killing of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza over the past several weeks and now continuing into December must stop. The United States government must do everything in its power to bring the ethnic cleansing of Gaza to an end.

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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.

Recent CMEP Statements and Press Releases:

December 1, 2023: [CHRISTIANS FROM HOLY LAND COME TO DC TO ADVOCATE FOR PEACE AND COMPREHENSIVE CEASEFIRE](#). Three Palestinian Christians from Jerusalem and Bethlehem came to D.C. this week. One of their key purposes was to hand deliver a letter signed by several Palestinian Christian pastoral leaders from across denominations from the West Bank city of Bethlehem addressed to President Joseph Biden.

November 29, 2023: [68 Global and Christian Leaders Call for a Ceasefire and Peace](#). Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) joins 68 Bishops and Executive Leaders from churches and denominations from across the world to convey the desperate need for the government of Israel to end the bombing campaign and ground invasion of Gaza immediately.

November 24, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Welcomes News of Temporary](#)

[Cessation in Violence and Release of Hostages; Renews Calls for a Permanent Ceasefire and an Enduring Peace](#). Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) welcomed the recent announcement of the agreement between Prime Minister Netanyahu's government in Israel and Hamas concerning the release of 50 hostages and a parallel prisoner exchange, in addition to the desperately needed few days of cessation of violence. This is a critical step in helping to stop further suffering, but much more must be done.

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

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