

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) calls on U.S. Government to address underlying causes of Israeli violence against Gaza

CMEP affirms the Egypt-brokered ceasefire between the Government of Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. While we urge all involved parties to respect the ceasefire, we also call on the USG to investigate the underlying causes of Israeli violence against Gaza, particularly the 15 year-old blockade, and Israel's recent history of airstrikes with relative impunity.

Over the past several months, the Israeli Defense Fund (IDF) have conducted a series of arrests in the West Bank, in response to and to allegedly preempt attacks by Jenin residents against Israeli civilians, and blocked the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza significantly more than usual.

The violence escalated on Friday, August 5 when IDF soldiers attacked Islamic Jihad leadership, killing their top two commanders. IDF dropped bombs throughout Gaza, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad launched rockets at targets throughout Israel, most of which were intercepted by the iron dome or landed in remote areas. According to Gaza's Ministry of Health, at least 360 Gazans were injured 46 people were killed, including 16 children and many civilians. Though there is debate regarding whether any of those casualties were the result of failed PIJ rockets, IDF's excessive bombing is unacceptable. While some rockets did enter civilian areas in Israel, no Israelis were killed, and reports claim between 47 and 70 were wounded. CMEP condemns all violence and mourns with those who are grieving the loss of civilian life.

CMEP calls on the US government to work to preserve the ceasefire, and to insist Israel ends its 15- year blockade of Gaza, an ongoing humanitarian catastrophe and act of collective punishment that has turned Gaza into the world's largest open air prison. The U.S. must stop enabling Israeli impunity in violating human rights and humanitarian law, and instead work toward a comprehensive and enduring end to the conflict that will result in human rights and equality for all Israelis and Palestinians.