

October 11, 2018 - Houston, Texas

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) joins Bright Stars of Bethlehem, National Council of Churches (NCC), and Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference in support of statement regarding "Jerusalem: What makes for peace?"

1. We have come together in this unique and ecumenical summit of Christian leaders and leaders of faith-based organizations in the USA, with Palestinian Christian partners, following the example and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ for whom Jerusalem was sacred. Jerusalem was the city that made him cry. He wept over the holy city, occupied by the Romans, because its leaders didn't know what makes for peace (Lk 19:42). With this summit we respond, to the call of the Psalmist by praying for and working towards the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).
2. 2018 marks 70 years since the city was divided and over 50 years since the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Today, Jerusalem bears the scars of these wars, ongoing occupation, fragmentation, and systemic discrimination of its native Palestinian people. And yet and at the same time, Jerusalem is the key to a just peace.
3. The increase in the Israelization of East Jerusalem, the move to annex major settlements within the Jerusalem Municipality, and new Israeli Jewish Nation-state Basic Law are in direct defiance of International law and threaten the vision for an inclusive and shared Jerusalem.
4. Our meeting location of Houston, the heart of the Bible Belt, is significant. We recognize that, as Christians, we are often part of the problem when we could contribute to the solution. As US Christian leaders, we were disheartened to see our political leaders move the American embassy to Jerusalem in violation of international laws and in spite of previous commitments, thus losing credibility and the leverage of an honest broker in the peace process.

Our Purpose in Meeting

4. We have come together for a day of reflection and open dialogue in a spirit of theological and ethical urgency to call for a just peace. Together, we demonstrate our ecumenical unity in action towards the end of occupation and a lasting political solution in the Holy Land. We honor the city that witnessed the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We reiterate the biblical vision of Jerusalem as an inclusive city where people of different cultural, ethnic, and religious background come together in a spirit of unity, equality and mutual recognition (Acts 2:1-13).
5. As Christians, we acknowledge the spiritual kinship and ties of the three Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—to Jerusalem, the city each calls holy. We acknowledge also that this is a city important for two peoples, Palestinians and Israelis, and for their national aspirations.

6. Thus, together with all churches in the Holy Land we continue to advocate for Jerusalem as an open and shared city for two peoples and three faiths based on equality and mutuality, a cosmopolitan city with an international dimension as well.

Our Beliefs and Affirmations

7. We believe that working towards a just and lasting solution in Jerusalem would not only serve the cause of peace and justice in the Holy Land but also promote overall peace in the Middle East region. A reconciled city would diminish the claims of those who exploit this conflict and religion to serve their own motives, exclusivist theologies and racist ideologies.

8. As Christian leaders, we commit to work together proactively to protect the threatened presence of Palestinian Christians in Jerusalem and the entire Holy Land. The current absence of a just political solution is eroding the Christian presence and causing many of these Palestinian “living stones” to seek lives of dignity and freedom far from their homes in the troubled Holy Land. A just and peaceful solution is imperative, and will contribute to the wellbeing of all the children of God in the city.

Our Call for Action

As US Christian leaders, gathered together at this Jerusalem Conference, we:

9. Urge our President and his administration to recognize East Jerusalem as the Capital of the State of Palestine, thus creating a level playing field for Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate a shared Jerusalem;

10. Urge the US Congress, American politicians and public figures to adopt a balanced policy that would pave the way for a just solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a lasting peace;

11. Urge the US Congress to support international laws and reaffirm the critical role of the United Nations in protecting and promoting a just peace based on recognition of Jerusalem as an inclusive city;

12. Call on commercial, governmental, and non-governmental actors— including faith groups and churches--to exert economic leverage to end unfair and unjust practices and policies that violate international laws and conventions; and

13. Support inter-religious initiatives that promote an inclusive theological vision for a shared Jerusalem.

Further, we commit to:

14. Educate our constituencies regarding the damaging consequences of premillennial dispensationalist theology (Christian Zionism) and fundamentalist Christian teachings that create obstacles to peace, and peaceful coexistence in present-day Palestine and Israel;

15. Increase community-based pilgrimages and authentic tourism to the Holy Land with the intent to stay in East Jerusalem and in Palestinian towns and villages in order to engage with indigenous communities, to experience first-hand their hopes and fears and to contribute to their communities and economic development;

16. Support development in and around Jerusalem through creative social and economic investment, thus demonstrating our commitment to both word and deed, operating at the intersection of faith and finance; and

17. Support local churches and faith-based organizations so that they can continue their vital ministries in and around Jerusalem.

We remain committed to work on these issues and to follow up on this Summit and on the issues presented above.