



## Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP): Trump Administration Needs to Acknowledge Harm Done by Embassy Relocation

On Monday, May 14, the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem assumed formal status as the American Embassy in Israel. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) voices our most vigorous opposition to the Trump Administration's decision to relocate the embassy and recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel without equally acknowledging Palestinian claims. The timing of this dedication--coinciding with the 70th anniversary of Israel's independence and coming the day before both Palestinian Nakba Day and the start of Ramadan--is insensitive at best, and offensive at worst. We express our outrage at this administration for [refusing to acknowledge the role this decision played in escalating violence in Gaza](#), which resulted in the [deaths of more than 60 people and injury to over 2,200 Palestinians](#) during the week.

As prominent members of the current administration, including Jason Greenblatt, Jared Kushner, and Ivanka Trump, joined Ambassador David Friedman at the dedication of the embassy in Jerusalem, a crowd of about 200 people protested outside, including both Palestinians and Israelis. We applaud this display of unity and recognize the courage of Israelis who spoke out against imperiling the prospects for peace.

The festivities at the embassy [starkly contrasted](#) with the scenes of violence in Gaza as Israeli soldiers met Palestinian demonstrators with tear gas, [rubber-coated steel bullets](#), and live fire. The demonstrations concluded a month of unrest in Gaza leading up to May 15, the Palestinian observance of Nakba Day, which commemorates the displacement of over 700,000 refugees during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The U.S.'s decision to relocate its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem on such an occasion shows complete disregard for the Palestinian narrative and further inflamed tensions in the region. Jared Kushner's characterization of the demonstrations as impeding the peace process rather than resulting from a failure to reach a just solution fails to acknowledge the role that the administration's policy has played in this tragedy.

The repercussions of this decision will be both [immediate](#) and long-term, stifling Palestinian aspiration for national sovereignty and endangering both Israeli and American security interests. The belief expressed by Ambassador Friedman and other members of the Trump Administration that the decision to move the American embassy to Jerusalem will improve the prospects for peace and regional stability reflects a particularly misguided view that increasing Israeli leverage while weakening the Palestinian negotiating position is the quickest way to revive the peace process. Such a strategy is not extending an invitation for peace but the issuing of an ultimatum.

Israel's security depends on establishing normal diplomatic relations with all of its neighbors. The U.S. decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital will further both Israeli and U.S. diplomatic isolation. Closer ties between Israel and the United States and increased American military aid to Israel is no substitute for the security that a truly comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace agreement would bring to the people of Israel.

We at CMEP, and our [partner organizations](#), believe that U.S. engagement to help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires constructive contributions, rather than one side political actions that further cause division and contribute toward escalations in violence. Robust U.S. diplomacy with both Israelis and Palestinians is necessary to bring the two parties together for negotiations and a resolution of the conflict. The status of Jerusalem must be a part of these negotiations. We support the sharing of Jerusalem by the two peoples and the three faiths--Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Unilateral actions in Jerusalem and incitement to violence create tensions that undermine trust and make resuming meaningful negotiations and achieving a two-state solution more difficult.

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Formed in 1984, [Churches for Middle East Peace](#) is a [coalition of 27 national church denominations and organizations](#), including Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions. It works to encourage U.S. government policies that actively promote a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ensuring security, human rights and religious freedom for all people of the region. [Click here to unsubscribe](#).

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