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For Immediate Release: Churches for Middle East Peace: Throwing Mud at Peace Negotiations Does Not Bring Peace Closer

Washington, D.C. - January 19, 2018 - On Tuesday, the U.S. announced it would be withholding \$65 million from a \$125 million scheduled payment to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the sole UN agency working with Palestinian refugees. This announcement followed a Sunday decision made by the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) Central Council to consider the Oslo Peace Accord no longer valid and their intention to suspend their recognition of the state of Israel.

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) firmly opposes the withdrawal of U.S. humanitarian support from the Palestinians, and strongly urges the PLO and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to maintain their recognition of Israel.

These recent developments come on the heels of President Trump's December 6, 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. CMEP strongly opposes unilateral actions such as Trump's Jerusalem announcement and the more recent decisions by the PLO regarding their relationship with Israel.

Undermining humanitarian aid, unilateral decisions on Jerusalem, and suspending the recognition of Israel will create new fissures in already cracked relationships, moving peace further out of reach and leaving another generation of Israelis and Palestinians to grow up under a perpetual threat of violence and war.

CMEP Executive Director Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon said, "Throwing mud at peace negotiations does not bring peace closer. It just adds yet more burdens to negotiate for peace, and more pretext for those opposed to peace."

Despite the PLO's decision to suspend participation in the Oslo Accords, President Abbas "reiterated a commitment to a two-state solution based on international resolutions and the Arab peace initiative on the 1967 borders."

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) encourages President Abbas, the PLO, and Israel to continue working toward two viable states, Palestine and Israel, living side-by-side in peace within secure and recognized borders. CMEP advocates a just and durable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis in which Israelis and Palestinians realize the vision of a just peace, which illuminates human dignity and cultivates thriving relationships.

Formed in 1984, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is a coalition of 27 national church denominations 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.

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Formed in 1984, Churches for Middle East Peace (www.cmep.org) 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.

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