



**For Immediate Release:**

**Churches for Middle East Peace: Free Speech is a Cornerstone of Nonviolent Protest**

*Washington, D.C. - January 9, 2018* - On Sunday, Israel's Strategic Affairs Ministry published a list of 20 organizations whose leaders and activists will not be allowed to enter Israel due to their organization's support for the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement against Israel.

**Boycott, divestment, and sanctions are expressions of free speech and forms of nonviolent protest. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is concerned to hear that 20 organizations, including five from the United States, will be prevented from entering Israel due to their support of economic measures against the state of Israel.**

As an organization composed of churches and church related bodies, CMEP affirms and defends the right of churches and organizations, such as the American Friends Service Committee, to witness using economic measures in the specific case of Israel-Palestine. CMEP also affirms and defends their right to find appropriate ways to exert economic leverage on commercial and governmental actors to end unfair and unjust practices and policies which violate international laws and conventions. Such actions have precedence among churches in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and in many other times and locations.

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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