



REV. DR. MAE ELISE CANNON  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Churches for  
MIDDLE EAST PEACE

February 8, 2017

Donald Trump  
President of the United States of America  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Christian communities represented in Churches for Middle East Peace share your hope that peace throughout the Middle East region is still possible. In a recent statement, your administration reminded the American people that, “[our] desire for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians has remained unchanged for 50 years” and that “the expansion of existing settlements . . . may not be helpful in achieving [peace].”

Despite having been in office for only a few weeks, you have indicated that the United States will strive to be a leader in efforts to achieve a negotiated peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. We recognize the pivotal role the United States may have in reaching a settlement to the conflict. To that end, I urge you not to take any actions that could be harmful for the possibility of peace, including moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

We support direct negotiations between the parties of the conflict. On March 21, 2016 at the AIPAC conference, you said, “It’s really the [Israelis and Palestinians] that must negotiate a resolution [to the conflict] themselves.” Jerusalem’s status has long been considered to be a critical part of final status peace negotiations. Moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is the type of unilateral act that would undermine U.S. credibility as a facilitator in peace negotiations.

Mr. President, you have spoken repeatedly of your strong support for Israel. Rather than a sign of support for Israel, moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem would increase tensions between Israelis and Palestinians and in the broader region. These tensions would create a security threat for Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans. Moving the embassy to Jerusalem would be an obstacle to peace.

As the Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), I represent a coalition of 27 national church denominations and organizations including Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical groups whose memberships and constituencies include millions of Christians. CMEP seeks 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 in the region.

CMEP supports the sharing of Jerusalem by the two peoples and the three faiths and urges the administration to work with Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to Jerusalem’s holy places and religious liberty for all peoples. We believe moving the U.S. embassy would undermine trust and make resuming meaningful negotiations and achieving a two state solution more difficult.

In addition, I ask you to not allow the residence of the U.S. ambassador to Israel to be moved to Jerusalem. Moving the ambassador’s residence would be seen by the international community as functionally moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and raise all of the aforementioned problems.

Mr. President, I urge you to be a courageous leader and act in support of Israelis and Palestinians by not moving the U.S. embassy or the ambassador’s residence to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is important to Jews, Christians and Muslims. Its final status needs to be negotiated by Israelis and Palestinians with the support of our nation and the international community.

Respectfully,

Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon  
Churches for Middle East Peace Executive Director