



For Immediate Release: Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Applauds Senate Letter in Support of U.S. Assistance to Palestinians and UNRWA

Washington, D.C. - September 25, 2018

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) applauds Sens. Chris Van Hollen (MD), Dianne Feinstein (CA), and Chris Coons (DE) for [their letter](#) calling the Trump Administration to reverse its decision to cut \$200 million in USAID funded programs in the West Bank and Gaza and a complete end to U.S. funds for UNRWA. Signed by 34 Democratic senators, the letter makes clear the devastating impact these funding cuts will have on the most vulnerable Palestinians, including those who rely on the congressionally appropriated funds to receive emergency food assistance, medical services, education and access to clean water. CMEP believes the withholding of such funding will only exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and lead to further destabilization in the West Bank and the region as a whole.

Through USAID funded projects, including those administered by CMEP member group Catholic Relief Services (CRS), hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank are afforded job training opportunities, receive life-saving medical treatment for cancer and other diseases, and emergency food. By cutting funds to UNRWA, the U.S. is jeopardizing the education of over 500,000 Palestinian refugee children, fifty percent of whom are girls. As the letter states, the decision by the Administration to withhold aid as a mechanism through which to get Palestinians back to the “negotiating table” is misguided and will only further threaten regional stability. CMEP strongly believes humanitarian and economic assistance should be provided solely based on need and never used as a political bargaining chip.

“Humanitarian funding and the provision of basic services for livelihoods should never be used for political ends,” says CMEP’s executive director Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon. “The exploitation of the poor and the vulnerable in Palestine for political purposes is reprehensible. We are calling for all U.S. funding for humanitarian assistance and economic provisions to be restored.”

CMEP calls upon all members of Congress--Republicans and Democrats alike--to put further pressure on the administration to reverse this misguided decision. Allocating all

congressionally appropriated funds to Palestinians and continuing to fund UNRWA is the first step in ensuring the U.S. can play a productive role in working for a just and sustainable end to the conflict in Israel-Palestine.

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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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