



**WORKING TOGETHER:**  
Justice Can Prevail. Peace Is  
Possible.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Washington, D.C. - September 17, 2019

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**Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP): Church Leaders Share Vision for Peace in Israel/Palestine; Condemn Annexation**

On the heels of the Israeli election and with the U.S. Administration preparing to release the political component of its purported Peace Plan for Israel/Palestine, 22 Christian leaders, including Churches for Middle East Peace Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, wrote to the President outlining their recommendations for US policies that would help bring about a just and lasting end to the conflict in Israel-Palestine. A full copy of the letter, including signatories, is copied below.

In the letter, the leaders state “a truly viable peace can only be achieved by lifting the Gaza blockade, by ending the Israeli occupation of territories captured in 1967, through the realization of Palestinian self-determination, the recognition of Jerusalem as a shared capital for Israelis and Palestinians and the recognition and fulfillment of the rights of Palestinian refugees. Such a peace can only be reached in consultation with leaders representing both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.”

The letter comes shortly after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s campaign promise to officially annex Area C as well all Israeli settlements in the West Bank, a move that would codify a policy of displacement utilized throughout over fifty years of Israeli military occupation. Such a unilateral move will irrevocably damage prospects for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Churches for Middle East Peace strongly condemns annexation of any Palestinian land. Annexation of even part of the West Bank would be a disaster for both Israelis and Palestinians. Palestinians would be left without any possibility of a viable state of their own, and neither people would be any safer or secure. We are deeply concerned by the United States Government’s apparent support for these actions. We call on all Americans, especially America’s Christians, to oppose this threat to peace in the Middle East and the continuity of the Christian presence there.

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Dear Mr. President,

Finding a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is an aspiration shared by church leaders in the United States, Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories, and around the globe. As leaders of

diverse church communions and religious organizations, we ardently support robust U.S. leadership in coordination and direct engagement with all the relevant parties to bring about an end to this conflict in a way that addresses the human rights concerns of Israelis and Palestinians—Jews, Christians and Muslims. We hold fast to the understanding that all people are equal in God’s eyes, deserving of human rights and dignity.

While we believe the US administration must play a key role in helping negotiate a resolution to the conflict, we harbor grave reservations not only about many of the specifics of the economic plan that was released in late June in Bahrain, but also about many of the fundamental assumptions that underlie it. Without a just political settlement, efforts to build up the Palestinian economy alone are an empty gesture that is neither sustainable nor viable in the long term.

While acknowledging the pressing needs facing the Palestinian economy laid out in your administration’s “Peace to Prosperity: A New Vision for the Palestinian People”, we maintain that these needs cannot be adequately addressed unless their root causes are properly diagnosed and addressed. Underdevelopment in the Palestinian territories is not the result of natural market forces; it is the direct product of over fifty years of Israeli military occupation and policies explicitly designed to stifle the Palestinian economy. Even the most thorough and well-planned economic development proposals will ultimately fail if the political conditions needed for peace are absent.

A truly viable peace can only be achieved by lifting the Gaza blockade, by ending the Israeli occupation of territories captured in 1967, through the realization of Palestinian self-determination, the recognition of Jerusalem as a shared capital for Israelis and Palestinians and the recognition and fulfillment of the rights of Palestinian refugees. Such a peace can only be reached in consultation with leaders representing both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

In July, as the Economic Conference in Bahrain was underway, a group of Christian leaders from the U.S. and Palestine met in Washington, DC to discuss how to steps we can undertake to help bring about peace in Israel/Palestine. The statement from the gathering is enclosed with this letter. We hope it may be of value as your administration continues its work.

We understand your administration may soon release its peace plan for Israel/Palestine. It is our hope that in future efforts to reach a political settlement between the parties, your administration will fully engage with representatives from the Palestinian Authority as you have engaged with representatives from the government of Israel. We ask that your administration abstains from taking any further unilateral actions that could compromise the ability of future negotiators to reach a solution and encourage the Israeli government to cease all settlement construction, demolition of Palestinian homes, and to refrain from annexations. We again reiterate that the necessary conditions for achieving a political solution are not a mystery. Just as the secure existence of Israel is of fundamental importance for Israelis, so too is the right to self-determination the most basic principle upon which Palestinians rightfully insist any future peace deal must rest.

Respectfully,

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General Secretary  
American Friends Service Committee

Eddy Alemán  
General Secretary  
Reformed Church in America

His Eminence Archbishop Vicken Aykazian  
Ecumenical Director and Diocesan Legate  
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J Ron Byler  
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The United Methodist Church

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Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church

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Dr. Eli S. McCarthy  
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The Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller  
President  
Moravian Church Northern Province

The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
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Rev. Teresa Hord Owens  
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*Formed in 1984, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is a coalition of 29 national church communions 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.*