



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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Washington, D.C. - October 26, 2023**

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**End the War Now:**

**Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Fears Catastrophic Deaths of Civilians in Gaza**

October 26, 2023

Washington, D.C.

The war in Israel and Palestine must be brought to an end. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) calls for an [immediate ceasefire](#), an end to all violence, and a rapid and substantial increase in the delivery of lifesaving aid to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of people in Gaza. CMEP calls on Hamas to release all hostages and do no harm to those still remaining. CMEP also calls on the international community and the United States to stop supporting further militarization and pursue every alternative means to protect all Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

In the disastrous wake of intensified bombardment and violence over the last 48 hours, CMEP repeats its urgent call for a ceasefire. The death toll is spiking to unprecedented levels this week as Israel ratchets up the volume and intensity of bombs it is dropping in Gaza. Simultaneously, Palestinians in the West Bank are being victimized by an alarming increase in settler attacks largely out of public view as the world's attention is on Gaza. There are a host of additional humanitarian issues that persist from the bombardment and blockade of Gaza.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the death-toll in Gaza [reached 6,547](#) on October 26, approximately sixty-eight percent of whom are women and children. [More than 300 children died](#) in bombings on Tuesday, October 24, alone. An [additional 17,439 have been injured](#) since the beginning of the war as of October 26. There are also concerning reports about burn injuries from weapons that have not been identified. Human Rights Watch has [expressed concern](#) about the use of white phosphorus by Israel in Gaza and Lebanon. CMEP calls on the international community to

investigate these injuries immediately. There are now medical facilities, full of patients, that are imploding without access to electricity, fuel, medical supplies, medicines, and adequate staff.

The situation in Gaza is catastrophic and soon will result in the deaths of thousands more civilians because of the blockade alone. The humanitarian aid that has arrived in Gaza so far addresses a miniscule fraction of the need, and the blockade is strangling the humanitarian efforts that are in place. For example, the few trucks that were allowed into Gaza this week delivered only enough drinking water for a fraction of the population for a single day. Even before this elevated siege, Gaza was fully dependent on foreign aid, receiving [500 or more trucks daily](#). Exacerbating the lack of basic resources for the population, humanitarian agencies that could help mitigate the devastation are breaking down. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), for example, has stated that their operations will [grind to a halt](#) imminently without fuel and they will be unable to offer humanitarian aid. Hospitals are already unable to provide medical services for lack of fuel for their generators and of supplies. An Israeli ground invasion will only exacerbate the scale of the catastrophe exponentially.

Meanwhile, [95 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed](#) by Israeli forces and settlers since October 7th including 28 children. This has already been the [deadliest year](#) for Palestinians in the West Bank in more than 15 years. Israeli NGO Yesh Din documented over [100 settler attacks](#) on West Bank Palestinians in the last two weeks including the killing of six Palestinians with live fire, razing farmers' olive trees, and setting Palestinian cars and homes on fire. Israeli settlers and soldiers reportedly [detained and tortured three Palestinians](#) in the village of Wadi al-Sik on October 12.

The United States must use its influence to prevent Israel from further retributive and revengeful acts toward the innocent people of Gaza. The people of Gaza should not be punished for the atrocities of Hamas. A ground invasion into Gaza by the Israeli army would only further inflame tensions with the broader Middle East and could expand the conflict into broader regional warfare. The collective punishment would also sow the seeds for generation upon generation of anger and response.

Instead of [questioning the number of Palestinian casualties reported](#), President Biden must use his power and authority to do everything possible to negotiate peace. The White House National Security Council spokesperson, John Kirby consistently and rightly humanizes Israeli deaths by identifying Israelis killed as "human beings," "family members," "friends," and "loved ones." Palestinian civilians are human too, and their humanity must equally be acknowledged. Rather, Kirby states that Palestinian civilian deaths are unfortunate but justified because "[This is "war.](#)" "combat." It is "bloody." It is "ugly." And it's going to be "messy" and "innocent civilians are going to be hurt" as a result of the war moving forward. We affirm that every Israeli and Palestinian human life deserves respect and is valued.

Peace with justice is the only lasting solution that will protect the long term security and sustainability of the State of Israel. CMEP supports any 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, supports human rights and equality, and cultivates thriving relationships.

*Formed in 1984, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is a coalition of more than 30 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.*

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## Recent CMEP Statements:

**October 23, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Affirms the October 21st Statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem.](#)** CMEP affirms and echoes the call of The Patriarchs and the Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem’s condemnation of the attack against a sacred place at the Orthodox Church compound of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza on the night of October 19, 2023. CMEP furthermore supports their call upon the international community to immediately enforce protections in Gaza for Sanctuaries of Refuge, such as hospitals, schools, and houses of worship.

**October 20, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Condemns Attack Against St. Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza.](#)** CMEP reiterates that even during times of active hostilities, all efforts must be made to protect religious institutions.

**October 19, 2023: [CMEP Calls for a Ceasefire and Issues Desperate Plea: President Biden’s Humanitarian Relief is Not Getting to People in Gaza.](#)** While the United Nations reports the convoy includes [ready-to-eat food](#), development experts on the ground in Gaza have communicated to CMEP concerns that at least some of the food in the trucks waiting in convoy in Egypt would need to be cooked, requiring water, gas, and/or electricity to which displaced people in Gaza do not have access. . . . Water is not getting to people in Southern Gaza because there is no electricity to pump water through the system and because there is so much damage to pipelines because of extensive bombing.

**October 19, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) affirms the October 17th statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem,](#)** “mourning civilian victims of the massacre in Gaza and extending solidarity to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.” CMEP issued a statement [expressing sadness and outrage](#) at the bombing of Al Ahli Hospital and agrees this attack is a “profound transgression against the very principles held by humanity.” We stand in solidarity with the churches of the Holy Land and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and call for people to [respond through Prayer, Giving, and Action.](#)

**[See all of our public statements by clicking here.](#)**

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