



**WORKING TOGETHER:**  
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Possible.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Condemns Escalating Violence in Jerusalem  
and West Bank and calls on US Government to Engage**

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) condemns the violence and attacks being reported over the last two days in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). We grieve the loss of both Israeli and Palestinian lives and call on the US government to do everything possible to bring an end to the violence. Unless the core causes of the conflict are addressed, violent acts perpetrated by both sides will continue.

On Thursday, January 26, the Israeli military conducted a raid in Jenin which resulted in the deaths of at least nine Palestinians. According to the [New York Times](#), the raid “was aimed at apprehending members of an Islamic Jihad group” who had planned attacks against Israelis. The Palestinian Authority has called the killings a massacre and has threatened to cut off security coordination with Israel. One of the Palestinians killed was a 61-year-old woman. Another Palestinian, Jawad Bouaqneh, was shot and killed as he attempted to give first aid to one of the alleged militants. These deaths have brought the Palestinian death toll at the hands of the Israeli military in January to 30 people, including at least five under the age of 18 years old. This all comes after 2022 was the most violent year against Palestinians since 2008.

On Friday, January 27, a Palestinian gunman opened fire and killed seven Israelis who were observing Shabbat near an East Jerusalem synagogue. Of those killed, there were five men and two women, making this one of the deadliest attacks on Israelis in years. The gunman was shot and killed by Israeli police. The Israelis responded and [arrested 42 people](#) in “connection with the deadly shooting.”

In addition to these incidents, escalation between Israel and Gaza included rocket fire from Gaza and airstrikes from Israel. As of the evening of January 28, no deaths had been reported.

On Monday, January 30, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is scheduled to have meetings in Israel. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) condemns the recent violence and expects the U.S. government to start addressing ongoing core contributions to this conflict, including, but not limited to, the decades-long occupation of the Palestinian people in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. The U.S. cannot afford only to respond when violence occurs but instead must call on Israel to stop their policies that limit the human rights and dignity of Palestinian people within their borders and in the oPt. The US government must also acknowledge the exponentially disproportionate power dynamics between Israeli state violence and Palestinian resistance.

CMEP's executive director Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, says, "I am absolutely horrified by the news of these most recent tragic events. I cannot imagine what the families of those who've lost loved ones must be going through. May these events be a wake-up call to the Biden Administration. I hope the U.S. government stops ignoring what's happening in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The U.S. can no longer keep its head in the sand and remain disengaged from this conflict. Violence will only continue until the core causes of the conflict are addressed."

CMEP calls on the Biden Administration to not just respond with words but to lead in efforts of de-escalation. The Middle East will not stay silent until human rights abuses and other oppressive policies are addressed, including, but not limited to:

- The decades-long occupation of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.
- The continued annexation of Palestinian land and the ongoing expansion of settlements on land designated to become the future state of Palestine.
- The more than 16-year blockade of more than two million people living in Gaza.
- Collective punishment targeting associates and family members of individuals accused of attacks against Israelis.
- The discriminatory treatment and repressive laws toward Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians living in the oPt.

The U.S. has a responsibility to engage because of our extensive investment in Israel, including the billions of dollars invested in military support and foreign aid. The Biden Administration should also press the Palestinian Authority (PA) to take responsibility, engage in legitimate human rights cooperation and protection, and condemn the recent attacks on Israelis. If the Biden Administration does not take action in response to recent and ongoing violence, including Israeli state violence against Palestinians, they will be de facto offering their blessing to continued escalations.

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) will continue our efforts to educate American Christians and others about these realities and to advocate for a just and durable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis in which Israelis and Palestinians might realize the vision of a just peace, which advances security and self-determination for all Israelis and Palestinians.

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*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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