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**Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Calls for a Ceasefire and Issues Desperate Plea:
President Biden's Humanitarian Relief is Not Getting to People in Gaza**

October 19, 2023
Washington, D.C.

On October 13, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) issued a statement calling on the United States, "[Not to Ignore Gazans Dying on the World's Watch](#)." This plea is not hyperbolic. A week later, 3,785 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed and more than 12,000 wounded since the beginning of the war on October 7. Reports indicate more than [one thousand children](#) have already died in this war.

On Sunday, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [announced](#) on CNN's State of the Union that "Israel had restored water service to South Gaza." Today, five days later, most civilians in Gaza still do not have adequate water.

As of October 18, reports indicate that UNRWA facilities have almost run out of water, with the average ration down to one liter of water per person per day; the minimum per international standards is 15 liters per person per day. Some UNRWA facilities have [no water](#) supplies available at all. Estimates indicate the average water consumption for all needs (drinking, cooking, and hygiene) to be [three liters per person](#) per day for all people in Gaza. Much of the water consumed is from [unsafe sources](#), which increases the risk of waterborne illnesses, can cause infectious disease outbreaks, and even result in death. Sewage, chemicals, and seawater contaminate the only aquifer in Gaza.

The White House announced following President Biden's October 18th visit to Israel the promise of \$100 million in [humanitarian assistance](#) to the people of Gaza and support to those who are trying to "get to safety or provide assistance, and [are] facilitating access to food, water, medical, and shelter." Israel responded that it would not thwart [humanitarian aid efforts](#) to provide food, water, and healthcare to civilians in Gaza, but it was committed to ensuring that Hamas does not benefit or receive supplies. President Biden has also proposed an aid package that would include billions in military aid to Israel.

Earlier in the week, extensive negotiations, including Secretary Blinken, the Egyptians, and Israel, reported that an agreement had been reached and that the Rafah border would be opened for humanitarian access and distribution, although the timing was unclear. The current agreement for humanitarian access promised only includes [20 trucks](#) initially to "see how it goes" to ensure aid is not redirected toward Hamas. Before the war, [hundreds of trucks](#) entered Gaza daily during the 16-year blockade to bring in necessary food and medical aid for UNRWA refugees to prevent malnutrition and promote basic levels of health and wellness. The 20 trucks won't begin touching the catastrophic humanitarian need.

In addition, since the deal was struck between Israel, the U.S., and Egypt, on the morning of October 19, more [bombings occurred](#) at the Rafah border with Egypt and in the Southern Gazan city of Khan Younis. There are no safe zones in Gaza. No humanitarian access has been allowed into the enclave since the beginning of the war, 13 days ago. In addition, while the President was meeting with Israeli officials and agreeing to a humanitarian aid package, the United States [vetoed a draft resolution](#) presented by the United Nations Security Council presented by Brazil proposing "humanitarian pauses" in the bombing to allow for access for humanitarian workers and safe deliveries of aid.

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. The head of a major development agency in Gaza reports, "To even touch the growing devastation of the humanitarian crisis, food, and humanitarian relief would have to include cooking gas, diesel fuel to run water for generators for water wells, diesel and gasoline for ambulances and emergency services, medical and hospital supplies, and industrial diesel for the power plant." 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.

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) continues to call on the United States government not to ignore the growing catastrophic humanitarian crisis happening in Gaza. All efforts must be made for this war to be brought to an end. We call for actions to be taken to secure the immediate release of the hostages and ensure international protection for all civilians. We call for an immediate ceasefire and that the [root causes](#) of suffering be addressed. We urge the President and Congress to publicly

call for de-escalation and restraint by all sides. We call on all parties to abide by the laws of war, including the Geneva Conventions and customary international law, and for the collective punishment imposed upon the civilians in Gaza to be brought to an end. Atrocities against civilians are never justified.

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.

Previous CMEP statements about the Israel-Hamas War:

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](#).

October 17, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Expresses Sadness and Outrage at Bombing of Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza](#). Today, Christians around the world followed the call of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem for a day of prayer and fasting for peace and reconciliation and an end to the war between Israel and Hamas. Even as we pray, we find ourselves confronting immense pain and a devastating death toll after the bombing of Al-Ahli Arab Hospital, an Anglican hospital in Gaza. Al-Ahli Arab Hospital has provided a critical and courageous ministry of health care provision to serve the people of Gaza for many years.

October 13, 2023: [CMEP Joins United Nations in Call Not to Ignore Gazans “Dying at the World’s Watch.”](#) CMEP and our member communions call for the world not to ignore the catastrophic crisis happening in Gaza.

October 13, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Affirms Statement from Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem](#).

October 12, 2023: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) joined 25 other Church-based denominations and organizations](#) in a letter to Congress to call for a ceasefire, restraint by all

sides, protection of civilians, and release of hostages.

October 9, 2023: [CMEP Implores Restraint, De-escalation of Conflict, Humanitarian Access, and Addressing Core Issues of Conflict](#) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) continues to grieve the devastating loss of life in Israel/Palestine. As the numbers of those killed and injured climb, we ask people of faith to remain committed to praying and working toward an immediate end to the violence. Yet, cessation of conflict will not automatically bring justice. Without attention to the core systemic issues of the war and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory, there will be no real peace. At a time when the rush by governments will be for more military responses, CMEP prays for the de-escalation of violence to prevail. We urge an escalation of diplomatic efforts by the United States, through the United Nations, and other regional bodies. Too many people are already grieving the loss of loved ones.

October 7, 2023: [CMEP Condemns All Acts of Violence, Calls for Prayer, and Implores Global Leaders to Address Core Issues of the War between Hamas and Israel:](#) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is deeply grieved by the news coming out of Israel and Gaza today. CMEP condemns all acts of violence against civilians that have occurred in the past twenty-four hours, as fighting has escalated between Hamas and Israel. As of late Saturday (EDT), reports indicated that hundreds have been killed and thousands wounded, both Israelis and Palestinians. CMEP mourns with the victims of the violence and their families.

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