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Washington, D.C. - October 7, 2023

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CMEP Condemns All Acts of Violence, Calls for Prayer, and Implores Global Leaders to Address Core Issues of the War between Hamas and Israel

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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.

The actions of Hamas and the Israeli response in Gaza in no way advance peace, but rather cause loss of life and harm, grief, and devastation, not only to the individuals affected, but also to the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people in seeking an end to the decades long occupation and the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Throughout this year, CMEP and allies have [urgently been calling attention](#) to the evolving context, characterized by escalating levels of violence between settlers, soldiers, and Palestinians. The increased nationalism and radicalization within Israeli society have led to more frequent and numerous incidents of hatred, racialized tensions, settler attacks, and incursions onto Muslim and Christian holy sites such as Stella Maris Monastery in Haifa and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. These realities are not justifications but have long been ignored by the international community, including the longstanding frustration and desperation of the Palestinian people who seek an end to the oppression of the occupation and Israeli desires for lack of fear and for security. It is time for the US and the international community to strengthen efforts to de-escalate the systemic violence that has gone on for decades.

CMEP reiterates its consistent call for a negotiated, just, and peaceful resolution to the conflict that advances security and self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians. A just peace will only be realized when all parties respect and protect the full human rights of all. In light of the current war, we make the following desperate pleas:

CMEP calls on all parties to end all acts of violence and aggression and to pursue peaceful and diplomatic resolutions to accomplish their desired outcomes.

CMEP is concerned that Israel's response is disproportionate and urges it not to engage in military actions that devastate Palestinian civilian populations. CMEP opposes Israel's practice of collective punishment of all people in Gaza, including the turning off of electricity and water.

CMEP calls on Hamas to stop all acts of aggression, the targeting of Israeli civilians, and the taking of civilian hostages.

CMEP calls on the United States government, including the Biden Administration and Congress, not to act rashly but to prioritize immediate diplomatic measures to bring an end to the violence, including through the United Nations.

CMEP urges the US government to refrain from providing further unrestricted material and political support for further militarization of the conflict but rather focus on the protection of all civilians, especially the most vulnerable. The US must not prioritize the support of one side of the conflict over another but support the safety and dignity of all people in the Holy Land, including Israelis and Palestinians. While the United States empathizes with Israeli suffering, so should it empathize with Palestinian suffering. Furthermore, the U.S. should not exacerbate the problem by ignoring the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people for their rights.

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) calls upon all Christians and people of faith to pray for peace - not an empty peace devoid of justice, equality, and hope for all people, but a deep, lasting, and just peace that addresses core systemic issues of the conflict, from Palestinian needs for self-determination and freedom to Israel's needs for safety and security.