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**MEDIA ADVISORY FOR PRESS INVITATION
NOVEMBER 20, 2023, 6:00 PM EST**

Washington, D.C. - November 16, 2023

Prayer Vigil 
Ceasefire Now!

November 20, 2023
6 p.m.

Lafayette Square
Washington, D.C.

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**WHITE HOUSE CANDLELIGHT PRAYER VIGIL
CALLING FOR CEASEFIRE AND END TO VIOLENCE
BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HAMAS**

What: A candlelight prayer vigil led by national Christian leaders calling for a ceasefire and an end to all violence between Israel and Hamas. The speakers and sponsoring organizations are in agreement calling for a bilateral ceasefire, immediate and adequate humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and the release of hostages. All are welcome.

* Please note: Flame candles are allowed but only with protectors.

When: Monday, November 20, 2023, 6:00 PM EST

Where: Lafayette Square, Washington, D.C.

Who: Speakers include: Bishop William J. Barber, II, Repairers of the Breach and Yale Center for Public Theology and Public Policy; The Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Washington; Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP); Shane Claiborne, Red Letter Christians (RLC); Michelle Dunne, Franciscan Action Network (FAN); Hassan El-Tayyab, Friends Committee for National Legislation; Susan Gunn, Maryknoll Office of Global Concern; Lisa Sharon Harper, Freedom Road; Bridget Moix, General Secretary, Friends Committee for National Legislation (FCNL); Bishop Leila Ortiz, Metropolitan Washington D.C. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Rev. Adam Taylor, Sojourners; Leslie Copeland Tune, National Council of Churches (NCC); Ekemini Uwan, Public Theologian.

Sponsoring Organizations: Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), Christian Church Disciples of Christ, Christians for Social Action (CSA), Church of the Brethren, Determinetruth, Episcopal Diocese of Washington, Evangelical4Justice (E4J), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Franciscan Action Network (FAN), Freedom Road, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), Maryknoll Office of Global Concern, National Council of Churches (NCC), Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East (NEME), Presbyterian Church USA, Red Letter Christians (RLC), Sojourners, United Church of Christ (UCC).

Registration: <https://cmep.org/event/candlelight-prayer-vigil/>

Quotes from Sponsoring Denominations and Organizations:

* Please note: Authors of quotes speak for themselves and their respective organizations, their views do not necessarily reflect the perspectives of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) or other sponsorship organizations.

We condemn the brutal attacks of Hamas on October 7th that caused the loss of life of nearly 1,400 Israelis and citizens of other nations, and we call for the immediate release of all civilians held hostage. The horrific violence of Hamas does not justify further violence against Palestinian civilians. We condemn the collective punishment imposed upon the more than 2.2 million Palestinians living in Gaza when, on October 8, the Israeli government cut off water, gas, and

electricity, and all goods and supplies to the territory, putting even more pressure on a community already suffering from a humanitarian crisis more than a decade in the making. We further condemn Israel's large-scale air bombardment and ground invasion that continues to have an indiscriminate and tragically disproportionate impact on civilians. As of November 6, Israel's unrelenting military assault has killed more than 10 thousand Palestinians in Gaza, including more than four thousand children, and also included the destruction of hospitals, churches, mosques, cultural centers, and other civilian infrastructure throughout Gaza. The lives of all people, be they Israelis or Palestinians, must be protected. ~ [November 9, 2023 Letter to President Biden from 30 Christian Denominational and Organizational Leaders](#)

Because we believe in the *imago dei* that is in all of us, we have to say an unequivocal "no" to indiscriminate violence, especially against women, babies, elders, and the sick. What Hamas did was wrong, and what the Netanyahu government is doing to civilians in Gaza is also wrong. It doesn't matter whether you use the language of "liberation" or "security" to justify it, our faiths teach that it's wrong to spill innocent blood. For us, the call for cease-fire, humanitarian pause, or just screaming "stop!" are a theological cry. ~ ***Bishop William J. Barber, II, Repairers of the Breach and Yale Center for Public Theology and Public Policy***

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) reiterates our call for the White House to push - as first steps - for an immediate ceasefire, for the protection of civilians, the release of all hostages held in Gaza, and for the immediate and adequate flow of much-needed humanitarian aid into Gaza. Beyond those minimum requirements, the root causes must be addressed, and the decades-long occupation of the Palestinian people must be brought to an end. Each passing hour brings news of more bombings and deaths in Gaza. Each passing hour brings news of more violence with impunity by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank. The current posture of the United States government is contributing to the ongoing dehumanization and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian people in Gaza, with a death toll of already more than 11 thousand civilians, including more than 4,500 children. The United States must end its complicity immediately and show support for the protection of all human life, advocating for a just and durable resolution to this crisis in which all Israelis and Palestinians might realize a vision of a just peace, illuminating human dignity, advancing security and self-determination for all. ~ ***Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)***

We at Determinetruth call on the church to fast and pray and to join us in exhorting our government and the governments of the world to demand a cease-fire, a release of the hostages and those wrongfully detained, an end to violence against all civilians, immediate humanitarian assistance to all those in need, as well as a negotiated peace that will bring justice and allow everyone in the region to flourish and live in peace and hope. ~ ***Rob Dalrymple, Director of Determinetruth***

Franciscans have served the peoples of the Holy Land for 800 years, and we feel deeply their intense suffering at this time. We pray, and we call urgently for an immediate cessation of violence, release of all hostages, and provision of food, water, fuel, and medical aid to Gaza. We call for

accountability, not retribution, and consideration for the needs of suffering people, not dehumanization. As Pope Francis has said, "Enough! Enough, brothers!" ~ **Michelle Dunne, Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network**

The Disciples and UCC know that prayer has impact. Through prayer, we focus our awareness and are moved to act, encouraging and emboldening others to join us. As we watch the continuing devastation of Gaza, we pray and work for a just and peaceful outcome that elevates the value of human life. That means an end to violence as there is no military solution; the immediate provision of sufficient food, water, medicine, fuel, and electricity for the people of Gaza; and a release of all those held hostage and imprisoned without cause. ~ **Dr. Peter E. Makari, Transitional Executive, Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ and Co-Executive, Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, Global Relations Minister, Middle East and Europe, Global Ministries (Disciples & UCC)**

The Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East (NEME) supports a just peace in Israel and Palestine. We support a bilateral ceasefire and an end to violence against all civilians, whether Palestinian or Israeli. We are deeply concerned with the urgent humanitarian crisis in Gaza and call for adequate humanitarian assistance to be allowed into Gaza immediately. We call for the release of all Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners. Beyond this, we pray for peacemakers, for the mercy, justice, and wisdom of Christ over this situation, and for the healing of the broken Holy Land. ~ **Mercy Aiken, Network of Evangelicals for the Middle East (NEME)**

Contrary to the logic of violence, there is no military solution to this crisis. This is a time for peacemaking — and that starts with a cease-fire. As peacemakers, we must honor the image of God in every Israeli and every Palestinian. We can be clear that condemning Hamas' actions does not negate calls for justice in Palestine, nor should condemning actions by the state of Israel be conflated with antisemitism... Throughout scripture, God commands both truth and action — and forbids their opposites: "You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand idly by when the blood of your neighbor is at stake: I am the Lord," (Leviticus 19:16). Right now, refusing to stand idly by means advocating for our own government to use its power rightly... Therefore, we call on President Biden and his administration to apply maximum diplomatic pressure to negotiate a cease-fire in order to limit the current war and restrain a wider regional conflict, ensure that sufficient medical aid, water, food, and fuel can reach Gazan civilians, and pave the way for political solutions that provide lasting peace, security, and justice. ~ **Rev. Adam Taylor, President, Sojourners**

This is a heart wrenching moment in Israel and Palestine. It calls for people of faith to pray and to stand for peace. As Christians, we must maintain our commitment to a non-violent solution to the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine. A non-violent solution must be based on protection, human rights, security, and justice for Palestinians and Israelis... As a United Methodist minister, along with other Christians, I am committed to the teaching of my church, which says, "The first moral duty of all nations is to work together to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or

among them. If we want peace, we must be committed to disrupting these conditions and systems that perpetuate injustice.” ... In addition to praying for peace, Christians must hear again the difficult teachings of Jesus. Love your enemies, forgive those who persecute you, and overcome evil with good. In every situation, our Christian duty requires that peaceful means must be employed in addressing conflict and the conditions that lead to war. We will continue to stand for a just and peaceful resolution based on human rights, safety, and security for all. ~ **Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, Leadership Council Member for Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), Retired United Methodist Clergy**

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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.

Recent CMEP Statements:

November 13, 2023: [CMEP affirms the November 10th statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem](#). Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) affirms the November 10th statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, which suggests “foregoing any unnecessarily festive activities” this year as Christians around the world stand in solidarity with those in the Holy Land. We are “standing in support of those continuing to suffer” as we continue to call for a ceasefire to allow immediate and adequate assistance to the citizens of Gaza.

November 13, 2023: [Letter from Church-Based Leaders to President Biden](#). In a November 9, 2023 letter to President Biden, Churches from Middle East Peace (CMEP) and thirty American Church-based leaders called on President Biden and his Administration to support an immediate ceasefire, de-escalation, and restraint by all involved.

November 9, 2023: [MEDIA ADVISORY FOR VIRTUAL PRESS BRIEFING: IMPLICATIONS OF ARMING THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT](#)

As casualties mount in Israel-Palestine and the U.S. Congress considers a \$14 billion request for additional weapons for Israel, at least one U.S. official has resigned and leading human rights organizations are calling for a halt to arms transfers into the conflict, at times focused on specific weapons systems. Faith groups are also pressing for a change in the U.S. approach. This press briefing is meant to give interested media an update on findings on how weapons are being used in

the conflict and the reasons behind these calls. We anticipate that some groups may have new data to share during this briefing. This briefing is for media only.

November 3, 2023: [Ceasefire Now! Biden Administration's Response Inadequate to](#)

[Catastrophe in Gaza](#) The devastating October 7 murder of nearly 1,400 Israelis and internationals by Hamas does not justify the [displacement of 1.5 million people](#), more than sixty percent of the population, in Gaza – many of whom are refugees already; the indiscriminate impact upon civilians by large-scale bombing; the destruction of hospitals, churches, cultural centers, and other infrastructure. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the death toll in Gaza as of November 2 is 9,061, more than 60 percent of whom are women and children. The total number of Palestinian children killed totals 3,760. The mass slaughter of civilians by any party to the conflict is unacceptable and must stop. The lives of all people, be they Israelis or Palestinians, must be protected.

See all of our [public statements](#) and [press releases](#).

Contact Us

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