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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Co-Sponsors:

Catholic Pray-in at the White House Calls for President Biden to Support Israel-Hamas Ceasefire

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: November 1, 2023

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Washington, DC – On Thursday, November 2 at 12:30 PM, Catholic and other Christian peacemakers will conduct a “pray-in” near Lafayette Park outside the White House to call on President Joe Biden, a Catholic, to abide by Jesus’s way of courageous love and heed Pope Francis’s plea to take the side of peace, and urge all parties to **de-escalate hostilities; abide by an immediate ceasefire; and release all hostages.**

The groups involved with Thursday’s event believe that the focus must shift to diplomacy, accountability mechanisms, robust humanitarian aid, and strategic peacebuilding, and that retribution is not accountability.

The witness will include offering prayers remembering all who have died (in the Church calendar, November 1 is All Saints Day and November 2 is All Souls Day), and praying for all Israelis and Palestinians who are suffering, have been injured, and have died in the war. Some people will prayerfully engage in an act of nonviolent civil resistance.

We believe urgent action is needed to stop the mass death and destruction and to save lives.

Co-sponsors of Thursday's pray-in include the Catholic Advisory Council of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), Franciscan Action Network, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Pax Christi USA, Quixote Center, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team, the Isaiah Project, the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, and the Assisi Community.

Quotes from Catholic leaders:

"Pax Christi USA is deeply aware of the U.S. government's complicity in this conflict, its tacit support of the ongoing illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, and its unchecked military aid to Israel. As members of the national Catholic peace movement, we bear a special responsibility to holding the U.S. government to account, speaking out against military aid that will only lead to greater bloodshed, and demanding action on behalf of a ceasefire and the painstaking work to create a just peace rooted in equality, human rights, and dignity for all." *Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director, Pax Christi USA*

"War is trauma, not justice. Enacting a ceasefire will create the dynamics for accountability of all parties responsible for harm. Credible messengers and other incentives can be mobilized toward the detaining of such parties without mass slaughter and destruction. As [Cardinal Pizzaballa offered himself](#) in exchange for child hostages, let us offer gestures of humanity to break the cycles of violence." *Eli McCarthy, Just Peace Fellow, Franciscan Action Network*

"We join together in praying for our common humanity. The first step of which is to call for a ceasefire, helping end the violence which devalues humanity and lifts up the lives that remain." *Sir Jeff Abood, Chair of the Catholic Advisory Council for Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)*

"There are no words for our horror at the number of civilian deaths in the past weeks. Since October 7, the bombings have killed over 3,000 children in Gaza. We demand that the United States government, from the White House to Congress, push for an immediate ceasefire, negotiate for the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and work toward freeing hostages. Together with other people of faith and conscience, we denounce violence against all innocents and seek nonviolent solutions." *Quixote Center*

"We grieve and condemn all violence and war, which only fuels more violence and represents what Popes John Paul II and Francis lamented as 'a defeat for humanity.' For far too long, political leaders have relied on militarized responses to conflict and have not addressed the root causes of conflict. The security of Israel is inextricably tied to justice for the Palestinian people. We urge President Biden to support an immediate ceasefire." *Lamar Bailey, Director, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team*

"I am convinced that every Palestinian and every Israeli, every Jew, every Muslim, every Christian living in the Holy Land is yearning for genuine security, for dignity, for freedom, for peace -- and that strong, courageous, effective nonviolent action - not more weapons and war - is the only path to such a future." *Marie Dennis, Pax Christi International's Catholic Nonviolence Initiative*

“Franciscans have an 800-year history of ministering to the peoples of the Holy Land and our hearts are broken by their intense suffering. We call on President Biden to ensure that the United States does everything it can to end the violence there and nothing to prolong it.” *Michele Dunne, Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network*

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:

October 26, 2023: [End the War Now: Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Fears Catastrophic Deaths of Civilians in Gaza.](#) 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.

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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