



WORKING TOGETHER:
Justice Can Prevail. Peace Is
Possible.

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CMEP Executive Director Highlights Three Palestinian Christian Legal Cases

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP). Over the past four decades, we have expanded our reach to include 35 national U.S. church-based communions and organizations representing a wide spectrum of Christianity in the United States. We are grateful for all who walk alongside us and encourage us in the pursuit of peace and dignity for all people in the Holy Land.

Our mission became more important than ever after the October 7th Hamas attack in southern Israel, followed by the massive suffering and loss of civilian lives in Gaza. We are ardently working, as we have for the past six months, to end the mass killings of tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, both Muslim and Christian; we are working to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, including mass starvation, and to remind all leaders that war cannot bring peace without a true commitment to resolving the issues at the core of the decades-long conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. We continue to call for the return of hostages being held by Hamas in Gaza. We also call for the release of prisoners being held unjustly in Israeli prisons. We believe that our government, and all governments, must do more to ensure all violence immediately comes to a swift end and to work for a durable, lasting, just peace.

We also cannot lose sight of the threats of escalated intimidation and attack facing Palestinian Christians in Israel and the West Bank. We were encouraged to learn recently that the United States Treasury announced sanctions against far-right Israeli settler leader Benzi Gopstein, the founder

and director of Lehava: a violent anti-Arab, anti-assimilation group with a long history of hateful rhetoric and actions against Christians and others. However, we are in regular contact with Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land who face difficult, life-threatening situations at the hands of military authorities and a judicial system that methodically and systematically discriminates against Palestinians according to legal and human rights groups. At this time, we would like to bring three recent cases to your attention:

Shadi Khoury, a Palestinian Christian minor and student at the Ramallah Friends School, was first detained in October 2022 and remains under house arrest. Shadi was beaten by Israeli forces and interrogated for 44 days; he was accused of participating in an attack against an Israeli car as it drove through the Palestinian-Christian neighborhood of Beit Hanina. Shadi and his family have denied all charges, and no credible evidence has been brought against him. Nevertheless, Shadi now faces a May 16, 2024, court date – this will be his 23rd court date in the past year and a half and it could determine his future. His grandmother, mother, and family ask for prayers that the case brought against him will be dropped and he will receive justice.

Professor Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, a Palestinian Christian academic with both Israeli and US citizenship, was recently arrested at her home in the Armenian quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. She was suspended from her position in the Faculty of Law at Hebrew University after a media appearance where she accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. Nadera was charged with inciting violence – a charge that could result in considerable jail time – and was shackled in prison for 24 hours before the Jerusalem Magistrates Court ordered her release. She experienced abuse and violent tactics during her interrogation. Reports indicate that there are new efforts to re-arrest her.

Layan Nasir, a 23-year-old Palestinian Christian, was taken in the early hours of the morning from her home in the West Bank at gunpoint by Israeli forces earlier this month. The Israeli military claims Layan poses a threat to the area but did not elaborate further. Layan was previously arrested in 2021 due to her membership in a “left-wing” student union at her university in Birzeit. She is being held under “administrative detention” for a period of four months without specific charges or a trial. As a resident of the West Bank, Layan’s case is under military law, which permits detentions to be renewed indefinitely without any reason or charge. Reports of the increased brutality and severely deteriorating conditions in Israeli military prisons since October 7 raise our fears even more regarding Layan’s situation.

Sadly, the cases are all too common and will not end until the occupation ends. We are committed to uplifting the stories of Shadi, Professor Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Layan, and all those living in daily fear of torture, harassment, and wrongful imprisonment in the Holy Land. We ask for your allyship, prayer, and support in these efforts by sharing these stories with your congregations and contacts.

As we approach Orthodox Easter and the Ceremony of the Holy Fire - a day that represents the light of the resurrected Christ spreading into the world - may we recommit ourselves to a future in which

all who live in the Holy Land can flourish, where Christians and all might live without the oppressive policies of occupation, and where the dignity and humanity of all are honored and respected. This is our hope and prayer this Easter season as we recommit ourselves to active engagement in dismantling injustice and the search for true peace, which will overcome hatred, disarm revenge, and embrace the essence of our common humanity.

May God go before us.



Mae Elise Cannon
Executive Director
Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)

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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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