



WORKING TOGETHER:
Justice Can Prevail. Peace Is
Possible.

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CMEP CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF STUDENT PROTESTORS

As the deadly violence in Gaza stretches into the seventh month, student protests are sweeping college campuses across the country, calling on college administrations and universities to divest from companies that profit from Israel's military campaign in Gaza. Many of the groups are also using their encampments to highlight that: many Palestinians in Gaza have been killed or injured including students and academics, most Palestinians in Gaza are displaced and living in tents, all of Gaza's universities have been destroyed, and Palestinian academics in Israel are being [targeted for harassment](#). Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) admires the students' commitment to highlighting the realities unfolding in Gaza.

The protests are also highlighting the complicity of the US government as a major supplier of weapons to Israel, and the benefits these universities and colleges derive from endowments and other funds invested in companies that support and profit from Israeli violations of international law and human rights. In light of these realities, CMEP continues to call for the following: a lasting and comprehensive ceasefire, unhindered and adequate flow of humanitarian aid, immediate release of Israeli hostages and Palestinians held in Israeli prisons without due process, suspension of US military aid to Israel, and support for a long-term and just resolution that provides security, upholds human dignity, and ensures freedom for all people in Israel and Palestine.

Any expression of antisemitism at these protests is unacceptable; CMEP condemns such expressions in the strongest terms. At the same time, these instances must not be conflated with the protest movement in general, which is overwhelmingly focused on defending Palestinian rights, ending the suffering in Gaza, and legitimately criticizing the destructive actions of the Israeli government and US support of those actions.

CMEP is also concerned for the rights and safety of peaceful protestors. Police have arrested protestors on [at least 30 campuses](#) as of May 1st. There are reports of heavy-handed, sometimes outright violent, tactics being utilized against students and faculty by [law enforcement](#), [administrators](#), and [counter-protesters](#) across the country. At times these tactics have resulted in physical injuries, as with history professor Steve Tamari, [who was hospitalized with broken ribs](#) after multiple police tackled him and dragged him across the ground at Washington University in St. Louis. With these dangers weighing on our minds, CMEP calls for the protection of those exercising their First Amendment right of freedom of speech.

CMEP stands with the American Civil Liberties Union in their [condemnation](#) of House Resolution (H.R.) 6090, the Antisemitism Awareness Act, which falsely and dangerously conflates legitimate criticism of the state of Israel with antisemitism. While instances of antisemitism and other forms of hate speech are regrettably growing, free speech must be protected, especially at a time when the Israeli government continues to carry out a brutal bombing and military campaign that is having such devastating effects on the civilian population of Gaza.

CMEP encourages Christians everywhere to pray without ceasing for an end to the bloodshed in Gaza and for all in the region who have been traumatized as a result of violence. CMEP encourages all to advocate for equality and human rights for all parties. We advocate for all to use their voices on behalf of justice and peace and remain committed to standing up against all hatred toward Jews, Muslims, Arabs, and Palestinians. As followers of the Prince of Peace, we call all corners of the church to take an active stand against the ongoing violence, in support of decisive action to achieve a just and durable peace.

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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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