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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Prior to Netanyahu's Congressional Speech, 200+ Global Bishops and Christian Leaders Call World Leaders to Institute a Permanent Gaza Ceasefire, Halt of Arms Sales to Israel, and Prevent Broader Regional War

Washington, D.C. -- In a new letter, over 200 global Christian bishops and executive leaders urged world powers to end complicity in the ongoing violence and atrocities committed in Gaza as a part of the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas. The letter calls for an immediate permanent ceasefire, work for the release of hostages and prisoners held without due process of law alike, the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid to civilians, and halting all weapons and ammunition transfers to Israel to ensure they are being used according to international law.

Signers of the letters include Cardinal Alvaro Ramazzini Bishop of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Bishop Christian Carlassare of the Catholic Church Diocese of Bentiu in South Sudan, Dr. Cristina Calvo of Caritas Internationalis in Argentina, Rev. Michel W. Hansrod the General Secretary of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Bishop Emeritus Peter Kang Co-President of Pax Christi Korea (PCK) in South Korea, and Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie of the National Council of Churches. The global response to this letter showcases the commitment of the international Christian community to have a lasting ceasefire now.

In response to these atrocities Christian dignitaries state, **“This growing conviction is contrasted with a perceived failure and impotence of the commitment to non-violent resistance, peacebuilding, and reconciliation that, as Christians, we share and support. On all sides of this conflict, belief in the possibility of peace and the commitment to non-violent approaches is waning. The window for constructive dialogue between combatant parties is rapidly closing. It will be replaced by more violence and a further erosion of hope and trust. As Christian leaders, we feel compelled to speak out before it is too late and broader Middle East war becomes inevitable.”**

The letter was organized by Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), a coalition of 35 national church communions and organizations working to encourage U.S. policies that actively promote just, lasting, and comprehensive resolutions to conflicts in the Middle East. This letter comes the day before Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech before the joint sessions of Congress. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) and partners are also hosting a [prayer vigil](#) to call for an end to violence and military action at 9 a.m. at the United Methodist Building on Wednesday, July 24, 2024.

CMEP has forwarded the critical letter directly to President Biden and his team with this cover letter highlighting specific ways the U.S. Administration has not only been complicit, but actively aided and abetted the ongoing violence that has had such a devastating impact on civilians in Gaza and has impeded the ability for hostage and ceasefire negotiations to progress successfully. Other signatories of the joint letter will be sending copies to their respective heads of state around the world calling for global leaders to do everything within their power to support efforts for a lasting and permanent ceasefire. This is in the best interest of Israelis and Palestinians and will deescalate regional tensions rather than perpetuate further war.

Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) quotes Jesus in these circumstances saying, “Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom heaven belongs.” (Matthew 19:14). Thousands of children have been killed in this conflict and thousands more are facing starvation. The death of one child, whether Palestinian or Israeli, is one death too many. Stop the killing now.”

CMEP’s executive director, Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, says, “The world must rise to the occasion of demanding an end to the atrocities of the ongoing cycles of violence that began long before October 7th. The massacres committed that day by Hamas and since by Israeli forces against civilians in Gaza are a blight on humanity. Global leaders can no longer sit idly by and allow such devastation to continue. Civilians in Gaza must be given the opportunity to live! Alternative solutions

- not war and violence - must be pursued so that Palestinians and Israelis might finally have the opportunity to live in peace.”

[The full letter and list of signers can be viewed here.](#)

[CMEP's cover note to President Biden can be viewed here.](#)

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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 and Press Releases:

July 22, 2024 [CMEP to Hold Prayer Vigil Ahead of Netanyahu's Congressional Address](#) Christian groups, led by Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) will gather to pray for an immediate end to the violence being committed in Gaza and for peace for the day ahead.

July 8, 2024 [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Stands with the Diocese of Jerusalem in Expressing Dismay at the Closure of Al Ahli Arab Anglican Hospital in Gaza](#) The closure of the hospital, the evacuation, and the declaration of the area as a red zone, in addition to the firing upon the ambulance, are all unacceptable violations of humanitarian international law. International law demands that health establishments and units, including hospitals, should not be attacked. In addition, the already vulnerable, the wounded and the sick, and those seeking shelter should not be placed in further harm or jeopardy.

June 28, 2024: [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Stands in Solidarity with the Churches of the Holy Land as Israeli Municipalities Attempt to Collect Taxes on Church-owned Properties.](#) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) stands in solidarity with the Churches of the Holy Land as they undergo yet another attempt by Israeli municipalities to collect taxes on church-owned properties— a move that threatens the sustainability of the Churches to operate. CMEP recognizes the harm that these legal proceedings could cause to the ever-shrinking Christian

community in this land. The Status Quo which has ensured religious freedom and harmony in the Holy Land must be protected.

June 21, 2024: [CMEP affirms The Episcopal Church statement on Layan Nasir and detained Palestinians](#). The Episcopal Church is one of the founding members of CMEP's 30-plus member communions committed to pursuing an end to the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. As the war on Gaza continues, we must not ignore the ongoing pressures Palestinians continue *to* face in other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. CMEP stands with The Episcopal Church in advocating for the release of Layan Nasir, the Palestinian Christian woman who continues to be held unjustly in Israeli prison. We also call for an immediate end to the war on Gaza and for an immediate and sustained ceasefire, full humanitarian access, and the release of all hostages.

June 12, 2024: [CMEP to Hold Special Briefing About the War on Gaza at Westminster Presbyterian Church](#). Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, the executive director of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), will host a briefing and community conversation in Delaware on Christian responses to current events in Gaza and broader Israel/Palestine. The briefing will follow morning worship and is open to the Westminster community and the general public.

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

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