



**WORKING TOGETHER:**  
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Possible.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Washington, D.C. - August 29, 2024**

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### **Churches for Middle East Peace Condemns the Escalation of Settler Violence and Illegal Land Confiscation in the West Bank**

Washington, D.C.

August 29, 2024

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) unequivocally condemns the escalating violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank and the ongoing illegal confiscation of Palestinian land. We stand in solidarity with Palestinian families facing dispossession and violence, as well as with those who have been wrongfully detained for defending their internationally recognized human rights.

Recent weeks have seen a disturbing increase in settler aggression throughout the West Bank. Over the past few days, the Palestinian Christian Qaisyah family in the Makhrou valley has been subjected to increased violence, including the forced seizure of the family's land and the establishment of an illegal outpost at Al Makhour. On July 31st, 2024, settlers, escorted by Israeli military forces, invaded the home and physically removed the family and their belongings from the property. Such acts constitute clear violations of international law. The International Court of Justice, in its July 2024 ruling, reaffirmed that the military occupation of the West Bank, along with the establishment of settlements and outposts, is [illegal](#).

We are particularly alarmed by Israel's announcement of plans to establish a new settlement, named "[Nahal Heletz](#)," in the Bethlehem region. This settlement, to be constructed on Palestinian land recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, is yet another attempt to sever Palestinian

territorial continuity west of Bethlehem, effectively encircling the city and turning surrounding Palestinian communities into isolated enclaves. This deliberate disruption of Palestinian space further undermines the viability of a future Palestinian state.

On Wednesday, August 28, 2024, Israel conducted its most extensive military operation in the West Bank in 20 years. The IDF launched simultaneous invasions of Jenin, Tulkarem, and the Al-Faraa refugee camp. As part of the raid, the IDF also blocked off access to hospitals while military bulldozers destroyed Palestinian infrastructure, including roads. At least 10 Palestinians were killed. We condemn the statement of Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz, who stated, "We must deal with the threat just as we deal with the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza, including the temporary evacuation of Palestinian residents and whatever steps might be required." CMEP believes such rhetoric could easily encourage mechanisms of displacement and ethnic cleansing to be employed in the West Bank as they have been executed in Gaza these past ten-plus months.

CMEP expresses deep concern over the arbitrary arrest and detention of Palestinian activists like Alice Qaisyah, who was taken into custody after confronting extremist settlers who violently expelled her and her family from their land. The subsequent release of Alice and her mother does not mitigate the injustice they have endured, nor does it address the broader issue of systemic violence being perpetrated against Palestinians.

We call on the U.S. government to take decisive action to halt Israeli incursions into the West Bank, including by ensuring that U.S. weapons cannot be used to further violate Palestinian human rights. The Biden Administration and Congress must denounce the inflammatory rhetoric and policies expressed by Israeli officials over the past several months, including Ben-Gvir and Smotrich, who have emboldened settler violence.

It is time lasting solutions be sought to bring an end to human rights abuses and the occupation of the Palestinian people, including but not limited to the expansion of settlements, land confiscation, and continued displacement in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. CMEP calls for a lasting and permanent ceasefire in the ongoing war in Gaza, the release of hostages in Gaza and those held unjustly in Israeli prisons, immediate and adequate humanitarian assistance into the enclave, and that the core causes of the decades-long conflict be finally addressed so these horrific cycles of trauma and violence will once and for all be brought to an end and all people in Palestine and Israel may have peace, security, and hope for a future.

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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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Recent CMEP Statements and Press Releases:

**August 26, 2024: Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Stands with Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem on the Urgent Need to Conclude the Present War and Turn from the Pursuit of Death and Destruction toward the Promotion of Life and Peace**

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) and our 35 member communions stand in solidarity with the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in the urgent need in calling for an end to war, death, and destruction toward the promotion of life and peace. We pray alongside our Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land and especially those who continue to take refuge in the St.Porphyrus Orthodox Church and the Latin Family Catholic Church in Gaza after more than ten months of nearly constant bombardment, deprivation, and massive civilians deaths in Gaza.

**August 20, 2024: Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) joins Aid Agencies and Medical Professionals in Warning of Dangers of Mass Polio Outbreak without Urgent Action, endangering a generation of children in Gaza**

Aid agencies and medical professionals have joined forces to call urgently for a ceasefire to allow life-saving polio vaccinations to be administered to about 640,000 children aged under 10 following confirmation of the first case of polio in Gaza in 25 years, with reports of other suspected cases emerging. At least 50,000 children born during the past 10 months of hostilities are highly unlikely to have received any immunizations due to the collapsed health system, while older children among the one million children in Gaza will have had their regular vaccine schedules disrupted or halted by violence and displacement.

**August 16, 2024: Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Stands with Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem and all Christians in calling for Religious Freedom in Israel**

CMEP stands with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in its criticism of the decision by the Israeli police to close and ban Christian worshipers from participating in the sacred services of the Feast of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in Israel. The protection of religious practices and the freedom to worship for all people regardless of creed or belief is a fundamental principle of a democratic society.

**August 14, 2024: Gaza Humanitarian Access Snapshot #3**

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) and leading humanitarian agencies outline how new 'evacuation orders' and relentless airstrikes have forced the displacement of over 200,000 Palestinians since mid-July, many of whom had already been displaced multiple times. Israel's ongoing blockade has only tightened, leaving aid convoys stranded and essential supplies inaccessible to the millions in need.

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

## Contact Us

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