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CMEP Executive Director Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon Spends Holy Week in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territories

Jerusalem – April 30 2025, CMEP’s executive director traveled to the occupied West Bank including East Jerusalem for Holy Week from April 11 to 20, after leading a multi-faith delegation in Jordan and Egypt. Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), visited numerous local church leaders to stand in solidarity with the Christian community in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel. Her visits included time with the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, Bishop Dr. Sani-Ibrahim Azar, as well as other Christian leaders from Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican traditions.

Rev. Dr. Cannon says about her time, “It was a privilege to have the opportunity to worship in Jerusalem and Bethlehem alongside other faithful on Palm Sunday and during Holy Week, culminating in the Holy Fire Service on Saturday, April 19, and Easter Sunday services. Yet even amid our attempts to worship, on Palm Sunday, we received the horrific news of the bombing of the Anglican Al Ahli Hospital. I also experienced the limitations of worship and physical obstacles impeding local Christians' access to sacred spaces in Jerusalem as we sought to make our way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Holy Saturday.” CMEP issued a statement and condemnation of the treatment of

Christians during Holy Week, and our unwavering solidarity with the local church, including the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

In addition to meetings with local Christians, Rev. Dr. Cannon also met with numerous Islamic and Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to discuss strategies the global interfaith community might take to end the ongoing violence and atrocities that continue to be committed in Gaza and other parts of the Middle East. Rev. Dr. Cannon also attended political meetings to share CMEP's priorities and advocacy efforts, calling for a lasting and permanent ceasefire, immediate and adequate humanitarian assistance into Gaza, and forward progress in negotiations as alternatives to war and violence.

President Mahmoud Abbas received Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon at the Presidential Headquarters in Ramallah on April 16th. The meeting, held in the context of CMEP's ongoing visits to the region, included members of CMEP's delegation and senior officials from the Palestinian leadership.

Also in attendance were Dr. Ramzi Khoury, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee and Chairman of the Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs in Palestine, along with committee members Mr. Mousa Hadid and Ms. Amira Hanania.

President Abbas warmly welcomed the visiting delegation, expressing his appreciation for CMEP's steadfast advocacy for peace rooted in justice, and its strong support for the rights of the Palestinian people—particularly efforts to uphold and strengthen the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

During the meeting, President Abbas briefed the delegation on the deteriorating humanitarian and political conditions on the ground, including the ongoing violations of both Islamic and Christian holy sites and the devastating Israeli military campaign in Gaza. The President described the situation as one of ongoing genocide, marked by grave atrocities against Palestinian civilians.

Rev. Dr. Cannon reiterated CMEP's unwavering commitment to peace and human dignity, emphasizing the organization's advocacy for an end to the violence and a future where all people in the region—Palestinians and Israelis alike—can live in freedom and security.

Dr. Cannon specifically highlighted the bombing of the Arab Al-Ahli Anglican Hospital in Gaza, which had served as a place of refuge for hundreds of displaced, wounded, and

sick civilians. She denounced the targeting of humanitarian infrastructure and reaffirmed CMEP's call for accountability and protection of all civilians under international law.

"As Christians, we are called to stand alongside those who suffer," said Rev. Dr. Cannon. "We remain committed to pursuing justice, supporting our Palestinian Christian siblings, and advocating for the rights and dignity of all people in the Holy Land."

This meeting is part of CMEP's broader initiative to engage with regional and religious leaders and amplify urgent calls for peace, justice, an end to the occupation, and the ongoing atrocities being committed against the people of Gaza.

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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:

[Apr 25, 2025 CMEP Elevates the Statement of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) emphasizes the recent statement from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, which affirms their deep commitment to solidarity with Christian partners in the Holy Land. During this historic Holy Week delegation, Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director of CMEP, was honored to meet with Bishop Dr. Sani-Ibrahim Azar of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). Their time together included meaningful dialogue about the ongoing witness of the Christian church in the region and how our respective ministries might deepen partnership in our shared mission to embody the love of Christ and pursue a just and lasting peace for all people in the Holy Land.

Apr 24, 2025 CMEP calls for preservation of the Armenian Christian Community While Commemorating the 110th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) calls for the preservation of the Armenian Christian community in Jerusalem, Nagorno/Karabakh, and around the world, as today marks 110 years since the beginning of the Armenian Genocide, during which 1.5 million Armenians were systematically killed by the Ottoman Empire. In addition, leaders of the Turkish Empire killed Greek, Assyrian, and other Christian minorities living under the Ottoman Empire during the early 20th century. On this solemn anniversary, CMEP joins the global Armenian community and Christians worldwide in remembrance and mourning. We honor the victims and their enduring legacy, remembering not only the lives lost but also the resilience of survivors and their descendants. More than a century later, the Armenian people are still awaiting full acknowledgment and accountability from the perpetrators of this crime against humanity.

Apr 23, 2025 Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Mourns the Passing of His Holiness Pope Francis

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) joins millions of people around the world in mourning the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. We grieve the profound loss of a stalwart leader of the Christian faith—one whose moral clarity, deep compassion, and unrelenting pursuit of justice marked a generation.

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

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