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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington, D.C. - August 12, 2025

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CMEP Statement: Churches for Middle East Peace Opposes the Israeli Plan to Occupy Gaza City

August 12, 2025, Washington D.C.- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) strongly condemns reports that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is advancing plans for a full military takeover of Gaza City. Such an operation would deepen an already unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe, devastate what remains of civilian life in northern Gaza, and place the remaining hostages in grave danger.

North Gaza and Gaza City have borne the brunt of the man-made humanitarian crisis that has engulfed the Strip. With food, water, and medical supplies deliberately restricted, large swaths of the population are already facing famine conditions. Starvation is being used as a weapon of war, a violation of fundamental moral principles and international humanitarian law.

International law is unequivocal: the occupation of Gaza would be illegal. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the occupying power bears an obligation to protect civilians, ensure access to food and medical care, and refrain from collective punishment. Nothing in Prime Minister Netanyahu's proposed course of action indicates such obligations would be met. On the contrary, every indication is that it would prolong displacement, hunger, and death on a massive scale.

Earlier this month, roughly 600 retired Israeli security officials, including former intelligence chiefs, urged U.S. President Donald Trump to press Israel to end the war in Gaza, stating that Hamas no longer poses a strategic threat and calling for action to "end the war, return the hostages, stop the suffering." Their warning comes as reports indicate Prime Minister Netanyahu seeks to expand

military operations amid stalled ceasefire talks, and as major Jewish and civil-rights groups caution that seizing and governing Gaza City would endanger hostages, worsen civilian suffering, and fuel further radicalization and instability.

A military occupation of Gaza City will not bring security. It will further traumatize a population that has endured relentless bombardment and deprivation, exacerbate instability, and heighten the risk to the remaining hostages held in Gaza. Military escalation is not a substitute for diplomacy; it is a choice to prolong suffering.

CMEP calls on the United States, the United Nations, and all governments with influence over Israel to unequivocally reject this plan, to prioritize an immediate and sustained ceasefire, and to demand unfettered humanitarian access to all parts of Gaza. We urge all parties to act with urgency to save lives, release hostages, and begin the hard but essential work toward a just and lasting peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.

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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:

[Jul 29, 2025: Churches for Middle East Peace Condemns the Second Israeli Settler Attack on the Christian Palestinian Town of Taybeh in a Month](#)

CMEP strongly condemns the renewed settler attack on the Christian village of Taybeh in the occupied West Bank on July 28, 2025, just three weeks after the July 7 arson attempt near the Church of Saint George. We affirm and elevate the powerful statement from the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem and the Forum of Holy Land Christians, who have once again sounded the alarm about the ongoing campaign of settler violence, this time involving masked men torching cars and defacing property with hateful graffiti. These repeated assaults are not isolated incidents but part of a systematic effort to terrorize the last all-Christian town in the West Bank and drive Palestinian Christians from their ancestral homeland.

Jul 23, 2025: Joint Statement: As Mass Starvation Spreads Across Gaza, Our Colleagues and Those We Serve Are Wasting Away

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) joins more than 100 humanitarian and human rights organizations in sounding the alarm over the catastrophic starvation crisis in Gaza. This joint statement urges governments to take immediate and decisive action to end Israel's aid siege, open all land crossings, restore the full flow of humanitarian aid, and demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire. CMEP condemns the killings of Gazans seeking aid, of which the death toll now reaches 875. Immediate access to life-saving aid is imperative as children, the elderly, and the most vulnerable suffer from disease, malnutrition, and starvation. The ongoing, deliberate starvation of civilians amounts to an international war crime and elicits global moral outrage. This must end now.

July 17, 2025: CMEP Condemns Attack on Gaza's Holy Family Catholic Church, Calls for Immediate Ceasefire and Protection of All Civilians and Religious Sites

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) denounces in the strongest possible terms the Israeli military attack today on the Holy Family Catholic Church in Gaza City, the only Catholic church in Gaza. The strike killed at least three civilians and caused extensive damage to the parish complex, which has been sheltering approximately 700 displaced civilians, mostly children, since the beginning of the war. This most recent attack marks the sixth assault on churches in Gaza since October 2023. Each of these attacks is in clear violation of international law, as humanitarian refugees and holy sites are both protected, and an attack on human dignity and freedom of worship.

July 16, 2025: Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Condemns the Israeli Plan to Forcibly Relocate Palestinians to Camps in Rafah

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) rejects the Israeli government's plan to forcibly establish humanitarian camps atop the ruins of the city of Rafah. This proposal would displace and confine more than 600,000 Palestinians, restricting their freedom of movement and removing them from Gaza. Forced displacement is a clear violation of international law. CMEP calls upon the global church, the international community, and the U.S. government to hold the Israeli government accountable and stop the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

July 15, 2025: Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Condemns the Killing of Palestinian-American Sayfollah Musallet

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) condemns the violent July 11, 2025 settler attack in the West Bank. Tragically, Sayfollah Musallet, a 20-year-old Palestinian American, and Mohammad Shalabi, a 23-year-old Palestinian were brutally killed. This deadly settler attack is not an isolated incident. Attacks in the West Bank have only been increasing, leading to the deaths of at least 7 American citizens. CMEP demands accountability, justice, and the immediate launch of an investigation by the American government.

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

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