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Washington, D.C. - August 26, 2025

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Joint Statement: The Latest Planned Israeli Military Offensive in Gaza City Must Be Halted

August 26, 2025, Washington D.C.- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) joined twenty church-based organizations in calling for Israel to halt its planned military offensive in Gaza City. With famine already declared in Gaza, further military operations will only cause further suffering and death for a civilian population without anywhere else to go.

As the letter reads, “this displacement will result in a modern-day death march that is clearly intended to ethnically cleanse half of the Gaza Strip and compress all of Gaza’s population into a tiny sliver of territory incapable of sustaining life.” The letter calls on all parties, including the United States, to use all leverage available to call upon the Israeli government to reverse its plans for a military offensive in Gaza City and to instead pursue a durable and lasting ceasefire.

A full copy of the letter is below.

The war in Gaza is showing few if any signs of waning. Every day seems to bring news of additional horrors that pile suffering on top of suffering. All of the killing, starvation, and destruction violates the essential *imago dei* in every person and that is the foundation of human dignity and freedom. The recent [determination](#) by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) regarding confirmed famine in Gaza impacting over 500,000 residents underscores the grave danger Gazans face even without the threat of increased military operations. We mourn those Palestinian Gazans

who will die in the coming days, and we raise concerns about the intensified risks to the Israeli hostages, due to the new escalations that are about to be implemented.

On August 8, 2025, Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Israeli Security Cabinet approved a new military campaign to re-occupy Gaza City and forcibly eject its 710,000 inhabitants. The plan simultaneously cuts an additional 340,000 people off from what few lines of assistance remain in the northern sections of the Gaza Strip. This military strategy not only puts half of Gaza's population in even more immediate danger, but could also result in the forced displacement of all of Gaza's population into the southern half of the strip. According to the latest United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) snapshot, an estimated 86.3% of the Gaza Strip is under the Israeli-militarized zone and displacement orders for civilians. This leaves only 13.7% of the Gaza Strip's original territory available for habitation outside a military zone for all of the Gaza Strip's population. The taking of Gaza City would further decrease this available space while squeezing much of the Gaza Strip's population into a piece of territory that is fundamentally unsuitable to allow such a densely packed population the ability to survive. The entire Gaza Strip has remained under Israeli military occupation since 1967, an occupation that the International Court of Justice deemed "unlawful" under international law.

Based on previous campaigns by the Israeli military forces in Gaza, the resultant expulsion of inhabitants from Gaza City and potentially northern Gaza would result in hundreds of thousands of people – many of whom are already malnourished and sick from a lack of adequate access to food, water, shelter or healthcare – being forced to walk at least 10-20 kilometers in the intense heat, without proper access to food or water. Most of them are elderly, women and children, and cannot manage such an arduous journey under the best of circumstances, let alone in the apocalyptic scenario Israel has currently imposed on Gaza. There are few to no functioning vehicles available to move so many people. Roads are damaged and destroyed, with remnants of war littering the entire Strip, so there are few clear avenues for safe movement. All of this displacement will occur within an active war zone under constant bombing, gunfire and shelling. More than 70% of Gaza's Palestinian population are already refugees, many dating back to 1948, and almost all of the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza have been displaced in the past 22 months.

Assuming Palestinians can survive the proposed expulsion, they will then need to cross the Netzarim Corridor – a militarized corridor that the Israeli military bulldozed through the center of the Gaza Strip—which is notoriously dangerous to cross and has resulted in the deaths of numerous civilians and aid workers. Finally, assuming people make it into the southern Gaza Strip, they will arrive in a region equally devastated, with 92% of all housing units destroyed or damaged and 100% of the population facing acute food insecurity in the coming weeks and 89% of all water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assets in Gaza either damaged or destroyed.

All of these actions proposed by Israel amount to collective punishment and forced displacement of an entire civilian population—a war crime as stipulated under the Fourth Geneva Convention (Articles 33 and 49). This displacement will result in a modern-day death march that is clearly

intended to ethnically cleanse half of the Gaza Strip and compress all of Gaza's population into a tiny sliver of territory incapable of sustaining life.

Churches for Middle East Peace and the churches and agencies signed below call on the United States, the United Nations, and all governments with influence over Israel to reject this plan of ethnic cleansing unequivocally, to use all available leverage to press for an immediate and durable ceasefire, and to demand unfettered humanitarian access to all parts of the Gaza Strip through credible and experienced aid mechanisms and modalities, including UN agencies. Our faith, seeing the image of God in each and every human being, calls us to feed the hungry, offer drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit those in captivity. We therefore urge all parties to act with urgency to save lives and prevent this catastrophe from further deepening, and to work to address the core issues so that a long-term, durable and just peace can be achieved.

Signed,

Alliance of Baptists

Churches for Middle East Peace

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

Church World Service

Community of Christ

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Franciscan Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe Office for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

Friends Committee on National Legislation

General Board of Global Ministries, the United Methodist Church

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Maryknoll Lay Missioners

Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic

Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

National Council of Churches

Pax Christi USA

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Provincial Elders' Conference of the Moravian Church, Northern Province in America

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team

Unitarian Universalist Association

United Women in Faith

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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:

[Aug 25, 2025: Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Statement on UN Declaration of Famine in Gaza](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) laments the famine conditions in Gaza and uplifts the UN official declaration of famine announced on Friday, August 22, 2025. This is not a natural disaster; this famine is entirely man-made. It is the direct result of the Israeli government's systematic restriction of humanitarian aid, a policy that amounts to the deliberate starvation of a civilian population. Friday's famine confirmation shows the world has failed to act.

[Aug 19, 2025: Churches for Middle East Peace Calls for the Safeguarding of Healthcare Facilities Following Attacks on Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City](#)

CMEP stands in solidarity with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem following the horrific attacks on Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City by "local outlaw bands" and an Israeli drone strike, which resulted in 7 casualties. CMEP affirms that healthcare facilities must be protected as areas of refuge and decries Israel's systemic targeting of these facilities. The international community must act decisively to uphold the sanctity of healthcare in Gaza.

[Aug 14, 2025: Joint Statement: Gaza: Israel threatens to ban major aid organizations as starvation deepens](#)

Together with more than 100 organizations, CMEP is calling for an end to Israel's weaponization of aid. Despite claims by Israeli authorities that there is no limit on humanitarian aid entering Gaza, most major international NGOs have been unable to deliver a single truck of lifesaving supplies since 2 March.

[Aug 12, 2025: Churches for Middle East Peace Opposes the Israeli Plan to Occupy Gaza City](#)

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.

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.

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

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