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Justice Can Prevail. Peace Is
Possible.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington, D.C. - June 15, 2026

Churches for Middle East Peace Elevates the Statement of the Lutheran Church and Expresses Concern Over the Arrest of Four Palestinian University Students

June 15, 2026, Washington D.C.- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) joins Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) in expressing deep concern over the arbitrary arrest of four Palestinian female university students in the occupied West Bank, including Joulan Abu Awwad, Sama Safi, Laila Khalil, and ELCJHL youth Natalie Abu Diya. Since these students are being held in the Israeli military court system, their administrative detention can be extended indefinitely without official charge or trial. Natalie and the other students remain separated from their families, communities, and educational institutions.

Natalie's detainment reflects a broader trend of Israeli raids, arrests, and suppression of academic freedom at Palestinian universities. As a result, many Palestinian youth feel fearful, anxious, and targeted. CMEP calls for the immediate release of Natalie and the other detained students. We join in prayer for their safety, the well-being of their families, and a just peace for all people in the region.

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Jordan and the Holy Land*



الكنيسة الإنجيلية اللوثرية
في الأردن والأراضي المقدسة

Jerusalem
15 June 2026

Update from Bishop Dr. Imad Haddad on Natalie Abudavveh

Dear friends and partners,

We give thanks to each of you who have prayed and advocated for the safety and release of ELCJHL youth Natalie Abudayyeh after she was detained by Israeli forces on June 2nd. Unfortunately, Natalie has still not been released.

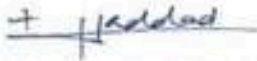
We have been informed that she had a court appearance yesterday, and the proceedings will continue in ten days. The other three women who were detained with Natalie remain in prison as well. We are deeply concerned about their continued detention and that these proceedings are being held in Israeli military court, where administrative detention can be extended without official charge or trial.

Disturbingly, Natalie's ongoing detainment is part of a pattern of recent Israeli raids, arrests, and restrictions on Palestinian universities, limiting academic freedom and restricting the right of education. Our youth feel targeted. We are losing an entire generation as our young people struggle to imagine a future in their homeland. Our ELCJHL youth are incredibly dismayed and anxious about the wellbeing and future of Natalie, their sister and friend, and for their own safety here.

This pattern of violence, erasure, and fear is destroying Palestinian life.

We once again call on the global church to remember your commitment to work for justice, peace, and fullness of life, and we ask you to continue to advocate for Natalie's immediate release.

Please continue to hold Natalie and her family in your prayers.



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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:

June 5, 2026: [CMEP is deeply alarmed by the recent arrest and detention of four Palestinian university students by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is deeply alarmed by the recent arrest and detention of four Palestinian university students by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, including Birzeit University student Natalie Abu Diya, a Palestinian Christian and member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Beit Jala.

April 27, 2026: [Joint Freedom Day Statement Calls for Global Solidarity, Truth-Telling, Unity, and Justice Across Continents](#)

On Freedom Day in South Africa, commemorating the end of apartheid and the birth of a democratic nation, a coalition of Christian leaders and institutions issued a joint statement linking the legacy of South Africa's liberation struggle to urgent global calls for justice Palestine and Israel. The statement was released by the Reformed Church in America (RCA), Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) and the South African Council of Churches (SACC), together with our ecumenical partners, the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC).

Apr 24, 2026: [CMEP Statement on the 111th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide](#)

On this solemn 111th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) joins with communities around the world in remembrance of the 1.5 million Armenians who were systematically killed and displaced beginning in 1915. We honor the memory of those who perished, stand with their descendants, and reaffirm our commitment to truth, justice, and the dignity of all people.

Apr 13, 2026: [Statement from Churches for Middle East Peace on the Interconnectedness of Violence](#)

At Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), we recognize that the violence unfolding across the Middle East is not isolated from the rest of the world. The grief, fear, and trauma felt in Gaza and the West Bank, Israel, Lebanon, Iran, and across the region are also experienced by diaspora

communities around the globe, including here in the United States. Many Americans have family members, loved ones, and deep ties to the Middle East. As they watch tragedy and destruction unfold from afar, they too suffer.

Apr 7, 2026: [Statement from Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) on President Trump's Threats to Iran](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) expresses alarm and condemnation of recent statements by President Trump threatening catastrophic violence against Iran, including rhetoric suggesting that “a whole civilization will die tonight.” Such language, evoking the destruction of an entire people, stands in direct opposition to the core tenets of the Christian faith, which call us to uphold the sanctity of life, pursue peace, and recognize the inherent dignity of every human being.

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