



WORKING TOGETHER:
Justice Can Prevail. Peace Is
Possible.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 17, 2026

Churches for Middle East Peace Delegation Travels to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine for Regional Peace, Interfaith, and Christian Community Engagement

September 17, 2026, Washington, D.C.- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) recently completed a regional delegation to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine, bringing together senior CMEP leadership and Christian partners for a series of meetings with government officials, religious leaders, humanitarian organizations, civil society partners, and communities directly affected by the ongoing crises in the Holy Land.

The delegation included Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director of CMEP, and Christopher Huth, Middle East Partnerships Manager. In Jerusalem, they were joined by His Eminence Archbishop Vicken Aykazian of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Her Excellency Vicki Downey of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

The delegation's engagements focused on advancing peace, strengthening interfaith cooperation, supporting the Christian presence in the Holy Land, responding to humanitarian needs, and listening directly to communities experiencing violence, displacement, and uncertainty.

Egypt: Christian Sustainability, Interfaith Engagement, and Regional Peace

In Cairo, the CMEP delegation met with the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) and, representatives of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria, to discuss the sustainability and future of the Christian community in Cairo and the broader role of Christians in Egypt's social and religious landscape.

CMEP also met with His Eminence Professor Dr. Osama Al-Azhari, Minister of Endowments of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, for a

conversation on interfaith engagement among the region's monotheistic faiths and the role of religious communities in advancing peace in the Middle East.

The delegation also met with His Excellency Dr. Badr Abdelatty, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Egyptian Expatriates, to discuss regional developments, the ongoing peace process in Gaza, and prospects for a sustainable political resolution to the conflict.

During the visit, Rev. Dr. Cannon also participated in a live interview with Al Qahera News, discussing Christian engagement and the role of faith communities in peacebuilding efforts in the Holy Land.

Jordan: U.S. Engagement and Local Peacebuilding

In Amman, the CMEP delegation was pleased to be hosted by His Excellency James Holtsnider, U.S. Ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, at the U.S. Embassy. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss regional developments and the role of Jordan and the United States in addressing the challenges facing the region.

CMEP also met with local peacebuilding partners to discuss opportunities for continued collaboration and joint efforts toward a just and sustainable peace in the Holy Land.

Israel/Palestine: Listening to Communities and Strengthening Advocacy

In Israel/Palestine, the delegation met with representatives of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to receive firsthand updates on the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the challenges facing humanitarian organizations working to meet urgent needs on the ground.

CMEP also met with a number of Jewish Rabbis, including representatives of Rabbis for Human Rights, to hear their perspectives on developments in the region, concerns within Jewish communities, and opportunities for interfaith engagement in support of peace and human dignity.

The delegation held meetings with multiple representatives of the United States government in the Holy Land, including His Excellency Ambassador Mike Huckabee at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, to discuss the recent increase in violence affecting Palestinian communities in the West Bank and other issues of concern to CMEP and its partners.

In Jerusalem, CMEP was joined by Archbishop Aykazian and Vicki Downey for additional meetings, including with Her Excellency Dr. Varsen Aghabekian Shahin, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine. Discussions addressed the deteriorating situation facing Palestinian communities, regional developments, and opportunities for international and faith-based engagement.

The delegation also traveled to communities across the West Bank, meeting with local leaders and residents experiencing violence, displacement, and threats to their land and livelihoods. Among those engagements were meetings with the Catholic parish community in Taybeh,

Palestinian Christian activist Alice Kisiya, and other community members working to protect their homes and lands.

CMEP also met with activists involved in the Save the Armenian Quarter movement, who are working to protect land and the historic Armenian presence in Jerusalem's Old City which is under threat of disappearing.

Supporting the Christian Presence in the Holy Land

A central focus of the delegation was the sustainability of Christian communities across the Holy Land.

CMEP met with the Heads of Churches and Patriarchs in Jerusalem to discuss the challenges facing Christians in the region, including emigration, violence, intimidation, and the broader pressures affecting the long-term viability of Christian communities.

The delegation also met with staff at Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem to learn more about the hospital's current medical needs and the challenges facing the Palestinian communities it serves. AVH is a critical institution within the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, and strengthening support for the network has been an important CMEP advocacy priority, including during the 2026 Joint Christian Advocacy Summit.

Listening to Palestinian Christian Leaders

The delegation concluded its regional engagements with a pastors' dinner in Beit Jala, bringing together more than 15 Palestinian Christian pastors and leaders from across the Holy Land.

The gathering provided an opportunity for Christian leaders to speak directly about the challenges facing their communities, including emigration, violence, displacement, land seizures, and the pressures threatening the long-term sustainability of Christianity in the birthplace of Christianity.

For CMEP, the gathering reinforced the importance of ensuring that Palestinian Christian voices remain central to conversations about the future of the Holy Land.

“This journey has reminded us that meaningful peacebuilding begins with listening,” said Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace. “Across Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine, we heard from religious leaders, government officials, humanitarian workers, activists, and communities who are all seeking a future defined by peace, dignity, security, and justice. CMEP is committed to bringing these voices into the conversations taking place in Washington and within the American Christian community.”

The delegation's engagements will inform CMEP's ongoing work to educate, elevate, and advocate for policies and partnerships that support peace, human dignity, humanitarian protection, and the long-term presence of Christian communities throughout the Middle East.



H.E. Dr. Osama al-Azhari , Minister of Religious Endowments, with the CMEP delegation,

Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Badr Abdelatty with the CMEP Delegation.



Bishop Julius, General Bishop of the Churches of Old Cairo of the Coptic Church, with the CMEP Delegation.



Rev. Dr. Andrea Zaki Stephanous, General Director of the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) along with his team and the CMEP delegation.



Dr. Varsen Aghabekian Shahin Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Palestine, together with the CMEP delegation, including HE Vicki Downey and HE Archbishop Vicken Aykazian.

Pastors' Dinner with Members of Palestinian Clergy and Leaders in Beit Jala.



The CMEP delegation visits Fr. Bashar and the Latin Parish in Taybeh, Palestine.



Members of the Save the ArQ movement stand with the CMEP delegation inside the historic Cow's Garden property in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem.

###

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 24, 2026: [CMEP Elevates the “Jerusalem Voice for Justice” Appeal For Gaza, the West Bank, and the Christian presence in their land](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) elevates and stands in solidarity with the appeal issued today by A Jerusalem Voice for Justice, “For Gaza, the West Bank, and the Christian presence in their land.” We join this ecumenical Christian witness in refusing to allow the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank to become normalized or forgotten. The appeal’s call for the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, an end to violence and displacement, and equality and dignity for all reflects our conviction that a just and lasting peace must include the rights and voices of Palestinians, including the historic Christian community whose presence is an integral part of the land’s past, present, and future.

Aug 11, 2026: [CMEP Expresses Support for the Armenian Apostolic Church](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) affirms the vital role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the spiritual, cultural, and historical life of the Armenian people and in the wider Christian family. We are deeply concerned about undue interference in the internal affairs of the Church and urge respect for its independence and sacred mission.

Jul 14, 2026: [Churches for Middle East Peace Welcomes The Rev. Dr. Stephen Murray as Chief Development Officer](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is pleased to announce that The Rev. Dr. Stephen Murray has joined the organization as its new Chief Development Officer. Rev. Dr. Murray brings decades of leadership in philanthropy, theological education, ministry, and ecumenical engagement. He joins CMEP from Georgetown University, where he served as Senior Director of Development for Family Philanthropy and taught in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. Throughout his career, he has held leadership positions at institutions including Ecumenical Theological Seminary, the Congregational Library and Archives, Barrytown College, Harvard University, and Yale University, while also serving congregations across several Christian traditions.

Jul 7, 2026: [Religious Leader Overcomes Personal Setbacks to Complete IRONMAN Competitions in Support of Peace in the Middle East](#)

After over a year of determination, setbacks, and perseverance, Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon’s journey to complete a full IRONMAN has become a powerful testament to the hope that peace is possible. Inspired by CMEP’s mission and fueled by a commitment to justice in the Middle East, Rev. Dr. Mae has continued training despite significant health challenges that forced her to postpone her original goal. As she prepares to compete in the Ohio Half IRONMAN in July 2026 and the full IRONMAN Maryland in September 2026, every mile she completes raises awareness

and support for CMEP's work to advocate, educate, and elevate voices for peace. Join Mae on the final stretch of this remarkable journey and help turn perseverance into lasting change.

Jun 18, 2026: [CMEP Welcomes U.S.-Iran Memorandum of Understanding and Calls for Comprehensive Regional Peace](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) welcomes the recently announced Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran as a possible first step toward a broader and more durable peace in the Middle East. For far too long, the peoples of the region have borne the devastating consequences of war, military escalation, displacement, and political instability. This agreement must mark the beginning of a comprehensive diplomatic process that will halt violence across the region and create the conditions necessary for a just and lasting peace.

Contact Us

Follow Us

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP)

110 Maryland Ave NE, Suite 505

Washington, District of Columbia 20002

(202) 543-1222 info@cmep.org

[DONATE](#)

[HOME](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[BLOG](#)

[EVENTS](#)

[Unsubscribe](#) or [Manage Your Preferences](#)