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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2026

CMEP Stands in Solidarity with the Armenian Church and Calls for the Protection of Armenian Christian Heritage

September 22, 2026, Washington, D.C.- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) stands in solidarity with the Armenian Apostolic Church and echoes the concerns expressed by the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin regarding recent statements by Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan, about the historic Armenian monastic complexes of Gandzasar and Dadivank.

The denial or distortion of the Armenian identity of these ancient Christian sites is deeply concerning. Gandzasar and Dadivank are not simply historic buildings; they are places of worship and enduring witnesses to the spiritual, cultural, and historical presence of the Armenian people in Artsakh. Their preservation is a matter of religious freedom, cultural heritage, and respect for historical truth.

CMEP calls for the protection and preservation of Armenian churches, monasteries, khachkars, cemeteries, archives, and other cultural and historical sites throughout Artsakh. We are particularly concerned by reports of damage, destruction, alteration, or appropriation of Armenian Christian heritage and believe that such sites should be protected in accordance with international norms and obligations concerning cultural and religious heritage.

The preservation of history is essential to building lasting peace. Falsifying or erasing history does not bring communities closer to reconciliation; it takes us further from the conditions necessary for a durable peace. A just and lasting peace requires acknowledging the histories, identities, faith traditions, and suffering of all peoples of the region.

CMEP therefore joins the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin in calling upon governments, foreign diplomats, international organizations, and institutions dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage to carefully assess claims concerning the identity and history of Armenian Christian sites and to ensure that their engagement does not contribute to the erasure or appropriation of that heritage.

We also affirm the right of the Armenian Church and Armenian people to preserve, access, worship at, and maintain the spiritual and cultural heritage that they have carried for centuries. Protecting religious and cultural heritage should not be understood as an obstacle to peace. Rather, it is part of creating the trust, dignity, and mutual recognition upon which genuine reconciliation can be built.

Peace cannot be built upon the erasure of history. It must be built upon truth, dignity, mutual recognition, and respect for the rights and heritage of all peoples.

To find out more about CMEP's solidarity with the Armenian Church and People, and their recent visit to the country, press [HERE](#).

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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:

Sep 21, 2026: [Churches for Middle East Peace Delegation Visits Armenia in Solidarity with Armenian Church and People](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) recently led a delegation of Christian executive leaders to Armenia for a solidarity visit focused on the country's Christian heritage, current geopolitical challenges, the situation of displaced Armenians from Artsakh, and the vital role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the spiritual and cultural life of the Armenian people. The delegation included representatives of CMEP, the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), and the World Council of Churches. The visit provided an opportunity for Christian leaders from across the global Church to listen to Armenian communities, engage with civil society, and deepen relationships with the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Sep 17, 2026: [Churches for Middle East Peace Delegation Travels to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine for Regional Peace, Interfaith, and Christian Community Engagement](#)

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.

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.

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