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October 6, 2026

CMEP Mourns the Killing of Two Christian Women in Gaza and Calls for an End to the Killing of Civilians

October 06, 2026, Washington, D.C.- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) mourns the deaths of Maysaa Khader Ibrahim Abu Dawoud and Mary Hafez Michel al-Najjar, two Christian Palestinian women who were killed in an Israeli strike on a residential apartment in western Gaza City on October 3.

Maysaa and Mary had spent much of the war seeking safety at Holy Family Catholic Church, alongside other displaced Christian and Muslim Palestinians. Only recently, they had moved into an apartment in the hope of rebuilding some measure of stability and normalcy after months of displacement and sheltering in the church. Instead, their lives were cut short. A mother and her daughter were robbed of their lives, their family was robbed of loved ones, and Gaza's diminishing Christian community was robbed of two more of its members.

CMEP extends our deepest condolences and prayers to the families of Maysaa and Mary, to the Christian community in Gaza, and to all those mourning their loss. We join the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Holy Family Catholic Parish, and the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Porphyrius in Gaza in grieving these two women and praying for comfort and strength for their loved ones.

Their deaths are a painful reminder that Palestinians in Gaza continue to be killed as innocent bystanders in strikes that Israel describes as causing "collateral damage." Whatever terminology is used, the scale of civilian death and destruction in Gaza is unacceptable by any standard. The loss of innocent human life cannot be reduced to a statistic or dismissed as an unavoidable consequence of war.

According to the [United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry](https://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/ufv/index.html), approximately 20,000 children have been killed in Gaza during this war. Beyond these staggering numbers are families whose lives have been permanently shattered, parents killed alongside their children, children left without parents, and in some cases entire families erased. Each death represents a human being whose life, relationships, hopes, and future mattered.

The deaths of Maysaa and Mary also underscore the particular vulnerability of Gaza's Christian community. Before the war, approximately 1,017 Christians lived in Gaza. Today, according [to figures cited by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, only 541 Christians remain](#). Churches that have for generations served as places of worship, refuge, and community have instead become shelters for people displaced from their homes. Holy Family Catholic Church and St. Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church have opened their doors to Christian and Muslim families alike, offering sanctuary amid unimaginable suffering.

The Christian presence in Gaza is not merely a demographic statistic. These are families who have lived in the Holy Land for generations. They are an integral part of the fabric of Palestinian society and of the living Christian presence in the land where Christianity was born. The continued loss of Christian life through death, displacement, and emigration threatens a presence that has endured for nearly two millennia.

CMEP mourns with the people of Gaza and continues to pray for an end to the killing, for the release and return of all the detainees held unlawfully, for humanitarian access and assistance, and for a just and lasting peace in which every human life is valued and protected.

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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 28, 2026: [CMEP Joins Humanitarian Organizations in releasing Humanitarian Access Snapshot #14](#)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) has joined national and international humanitarian organizations in signing a new snapshot documenting the increasingly difficult operating environment facing humanitarian organizations and Palestinian communities across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The snapshot, based on a survey of 29 international and national NGOs conducted in September 2026 and covering the preceding six months, documents the growing humanitarian needs and increasingly constrained ability of organizations to provide assistance. While the survey does not represent every NGO operating in the West Bank, its findings underscore the persistent and worsening challenges facing Palestinian communities and those seeking to serve them.

Sep 22, 2026: [CMEP Stands in Solidarity with the Armenian Church and Calls for the Protection of Armenian Christian Heritage](#)

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.

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.

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