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October 7, 2026

Three Years After October 7: Violence Cannot Be the Way Forward

October 07, 2026, Washington, D.C.- Three years ago, on October 7, 2023, an unspeakable horror was unleashed upon communities across southern Israel. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) continues to mourn every life stolen on that terrible day. We grieve with the families who lost loved ones, with those who continue to live with the trauma of October 7, and with those whose loved ones were taken hostage. We must not forget the suffering of these families.

Nothing can diminish the horror of October 7, nor the profound trauma carried by those who lost loved ones or whose lives were forever changed that day. But remembering that tragedy must not mean accepting the continued loss of innocent life. The wounds of October 7 cannot be healed through further violence, and one people's suffering cannot be answered by inflicting suffering upon others.

For three years, we have witnessed spirals of death and destruction that have brought neither security nor peace. In Gaza, tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed, including approximately 20,000 children, according to the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry. Entire families have been erased. Homes, hospitals, schools, churches, mosques, and communities have been destroyed. Millions have been displaced and subjected to profound humanitarian suffering. Today, the suffering in Gaza continues.

In the West Bank, Palestinians have faced escalating violence, displacement, settlement expansion, demolitions, raids, movement restrictions, and the loss of homes and land. Israeli civilians, too, have continued to live with fear, grief, and insecurity.

And the violence has not remained confined to Israel and Palestine. Over the past three years, we have witnessed the conflict spread across the region, through attacks and counterattacks, wars and invasions, and violence affecting Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Yemen, and other communities throughout the Middle East.

Three years of violence have taught us something that we cannot afford to ignore: violence does not create peace. Killing does not make people safer. War does not make security. Revenge does not heal trauma. And the domination of one people over another cannot produce a just and lasting future.

Scripture reminds us, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). This is not a call to forget the wounds of October 7, nor does it diminish the responsibility to hold those who commit violence accountable. Rather, it is a recognition that answering violence with ever greater violence only perpetuates the very cycle from which we desperately need to escape.

Peace will require something harder than military victory and continued violence and oppression.

For three years, we have traveled down the road of violence. It has brought unimaginable suffering, but it has brought us no closer to peace.

Now it is long past time for another road.

Three years after October 7, CMEP calls on the United States, Israel, Palestinian leaders, churches, and the international community to reject the logic that more violence will somehow deliver us to peace. Now is the time for a different way forward. The decades-long occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people must be brought to an end.

The road to peace will be difficult. It will require courage from leaders and communities. It will require accountability for crimes committed against civilians. It will require the release of detainees under administrative detention and the protection of civilian life. It will require humanitarian access and an end to the destruction and displacement of Palestinian communities. A just peace will require confronting the conditions that perpetuate occupation, insecurity, and despair. And it will require a political future in which Palestinians and Israelis can live with freedom, security, justice, and equal dignity.

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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:

Oct 6, 2026: [CMEP Mourns the Killing of Two Christian Women in Gaza and Calls for an End to the Killing of Civilians](#)

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. 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.

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.

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