

# Churches for Middle East Peace



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Alliance of Baptists

American Friends Service  
Committee

Antiochian Orthodox Christian  
Archdiocese of North America

Armenian Orthodox Church

Catholic Conference of Major  
Superiors of Men's Institutes

Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)  
Common Global Ministries Board

Church of the Brethren

Church World Service

Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in America

Franciscan Friars (OFM)  
English Speaking Conference,  
JPIC Council

Friends Committee on National  
Legislation

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese  
of America

Maryknoll Missioners

Mennonite Central Committee

National Council of Churches

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Reformed Church in America

Unitarian Universalist Association

United Church of Christ  
Common Global Ministries Board

United Methodist Church  
General Board of Church and Society  
General Board of Global Ministries:  
Women's Division

July 25, 2005

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon  
The Government of Israel  
Jerusalem

Dear Prime Minister Sharon,

Churches for Middle East Peace appreciates your decision to withdraw Israeli settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank. We feel compassion for the people who must move from their homes and for the whole of Israeli society during this difficult time that has generated many strong feelings. We believe the resilience and unity of the Israeli people will prevail.

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) is a coalition of 21 American churches and church-related agencies – Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant – that for 20 years has advocated for U.S. policies that are conducive to Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. CMEP is committed to the human and political rights of both peoples and for the wellbeing of all the children of Abraham – Jews, Christians and Muslims.

CMEP has long held the vision of a region where two viable states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side within secure and recognized borders and share Jerusalem. We support the leadership and engagement of President Bush and Secretary of State Rice at this critical juncture in Israeli-Palestinian relations. Your decision to withdraw from Gaza is an important step toward ending the occupation and reaching a two-state solution to this tragic conflict, but it must be the first of many steps.

Along with the Israeli and Palestinian people, we will be looking to you and President Abbas to help maintain momentum on the Road Map peace plan. While negotiations on the final status issues lie ahead, we ask you to act promptly on President Bush and Secretary Rice's request to cease actions that would predetermine the mutual agreements that must undergird a durable peace accord. We appeal to you to stop expanding settlements and building the separation barrier on land in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

For hope to survive, for the dream to become reality, you and President Abbas will need to help one another build confidence among both peoples that peace between neighbors is possible. President Abbas' insistence on non-violence has not yet proven sufficient to end militants' violence against Israelis. As we encourage his strong leadership to bring under control those who oppose his peaceful intent, we encourage you to refrain from retaliatory attacks.

Churches for Middle East Peace wants the Israeli public to know that a great many American churches and Christians are committed to ending the occupation, transforming the conflict and achieving a peaceful and prosperous future for both states - Israel and Palestine.

Sincerely,

Rev. J. Daryl Byler  
Chair

Corinne Whitlatch  
Executive Director