

# Middle East Christians denounce state-sanctioned violence in Gaza and Jerusalem – Mondoweiss

Clip source: [Middle East Christians denounce state-sanctioned violence in Gaza and Jerusalem – Mondoweiss](#)

## Middle East Christians denounce state-sanctioned violence in Gaza and Jerusalem

A rundown of the latest statements from leading ecclesiastical organizations condemning Israeli aggressions in Gaza and Jerusalem.



A general view from the tower of the Church of Redeemer shows the Dome of the Rock and the cross of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the old city of Jerusalem, on February 17, 2014. Photo by Saeed Qaq

Churches in the Middle East and organizations representing Christians have condemned the violence in Gaza that killed more than 240 over the past two weeks, and Israeli aggressions in Jerusalem. Here is a rundown of the latest statements from leading ecclesiastical organizations.

One of the most prominent voices from the region, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), [issued a statement](#) shortly after hostilities escalated on May 12, declaring:

---

*“Violence only generates violence and hatred only leads to more hatred, racial discrimination only makes revolution, and extremism only breeds extremism, and deprivation only engenders uprising, and the only way out of this destructive cycle is to give everyone his rights, through recognition of the rights of the oppressed firstly and, secondly, by taking this recognition to the realm of implementation without procrastination or equivocation.”*

Headquartered in Beirut, the MECC is comprised of 28 denominations – Eastern Orthodox, Orthodox, Evangelical and Catholic. Their statement continued, “we urgently demand that ‘decision makers’ and all the concerned forces intervene quickly and diligently in order to safeguard the rights and lift the injustice of this people, [that] no one else remains under occupation in the twenty-first century and in the era of human rights.”

That same day, Kairos Palestine, the most inclusive Palestinian Christian ecumenical non-violent movement, explained in a separate [statement](#) that the backdrop for violence in Gaza began in Jerusalem:

*“The latest cycle of violence began after Israeli security forces denied access to the Damascus Gate plaza, a popular gathering place for Muslims breaking their daily fast, and Israel’s subsequent violation of the status quo when security forces and settlers attacked fasting worshipers on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, the third holiest site for Muslims, allowing extremist Jewish groups to gather provocatively to celebrate the 1967 capture of East Jerusalem.”*

Kairos Palestine pointed to recent Israeli court rulings in favor of settler groups, which threaten to forcibly displace a number of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem from homes where they have lived for decades. “We insist that the latest violence be seen in its broader context,” the statement reads, declaring, “We don’t ask you to take our word for it. Civil society groups such as [Human Rights Watch](#) and the highly respected Israeli human rights organization [B’tselem](#) have recently declared that Israel is an apartheid state.”

In another statement, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem [said](#), “The special character of Jerusalem, the Holy City, with the existing [Status Quo](#), compels all parties to preserve the already sensitive situation in the Holy City of Jerusalem. The growing tension, backed mainly by right-wing radical groups, endangers the already fragile reality in and around Jerusalem.”

“These concerning developments,” they write, “whether at the Al Aqsa Mosque or in Sheikh Jarrah, violate the sanctity of the people of Jerusalem and of Jerusalem as the City of Peace.”

Echoing the centrality of Jerusalem to a just and lasting peace, the Latin Patriarchate [declared](#) on May 10, “This is a city sacred to the three monotheistic religions and based on international law and relevant UIN

...this is a city sacred to the three monotheistic religions and, based on international law and relevant UN resolutions, also a city where the Palestinian people, Christians and Muslims, have the same right to build a future based on freedom, equality and peace. We also call for an utter respect for the historic Status Quo of all Holy Places, including Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound.”

The Latin Patriarchate added, the “special character of Jerusalem” must be protected, as it is “the heart of the Abrahamic faiths, a place of prayer and meeting, open to all and where all believers and citizens, of every faith and belonging, can feel at home, protected and guaranteed.”

The same day, the YWCA of Palestine published a release [focusing](#) on the impending evictions in East Jerusalem as a possible violation of the Geneva Convention: “East Jerusalem remains part of the occupied Palestinian territory, thus Israel’s actions violate International and Humanitarian Laws as well as Geneva convention under which the occupying power must respect the rights of the Palestinians under occupation and cannot confiscate private property,” the group said.

Recognizing the unique responsibility of Christians in the U.S., Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) also released a statement two weeks ago, [calling](#) “on the U.S. State Department and Secretary Blinken to immediately intervene with the Israeli government to stop the aggression toward Palestinians.”

Based in Washington, D.C., CMEP is a coalition of thirty national church communions and organizations in Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical traditions, many of which have long-standing relationships with churches in the Middle East.

In CMEP’s statement, Kyle Cristofalo, CMEP’s Senior Director of Advocacy and Government Relations, said, “The Biden Administration has consistently said human rights and rule of law will be at the center of U.S. foreign policy. We call on the Administration to move beyond statements that fail to address how the current situation stems from the ongoing occupation and the systematic power imbalance. The U.S. cannot play a positive role in helping to bring a peaceful end to the conflict in Israel/Palestine where all people living in the land are treated equally and with respect unless we can acknowledge the primary drivers of the ongoing occupation and use diplomatic pressure to help to bring about its end.”

In recent weeks, many individual church communions issued similar statements.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation [called](#) “on the Biden administration and the United States Congress to publicly censure Israel for its violent expulsions of Palestinians and its illegal expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.”

And, in a release from the Presbyterian Church (USA), Clerk J. Herbert Nelson told congregants, “We stand with people of conscience everywhere, who say with a loud voice ‘enough is enough.’”

The Presbyterian leader and others have notably sought to build awareness through these statements that the latest heights of violence are rooted in the tinderbox that is Jerusalem. The continued presence of

the latest heights of violence are rooted in the underbox that is Jerusalem. The continued presence of Palestinians in the city, and the tenuous agreements around the holy sites are still as pressing as they were at the beginning of the month. While a ceasefire has held in Gaza since it was declared last Thursday, these underlying factors are still alarmingly in progress.

There are at least two sides to every story

So where are the Palestinian voices in mainstream media?

*Mondoweiss* covers the full picture of the struggle for justice in Palestine. Read by tens of thousands of people each month, our truth-telling journalism is an essential counterweight to the propaganda that passes for news in mainstream and legacy media.

Our news and analysis is available to everyone – which is why we need your support. **Please contribute so that we can continue to raise the voices of those who advocate for the rights of Palestinians to live in dignity and peace.**

Palestinians today are struggling for their lives as mainstream media turns away. Please support journalism that amplifies the urgent voices calling for freedom and justice in Palestine.

[Donate today →](#)

