

Churches for Middle East Peace

In Action – CMEP’s 2007 Advocacy Work

This report offers a look at some of the many advocacy activities undertaken by Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) during 2007. These activities include reaching out to decision makers on Capitol Hill and in the Administration, providing tools and information so that engaged and caring citizens around the country can make their peace message heard, and serving as a balanced and thoughtful analyst of both U.S. policy and the current situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

For more on these and other CMEP initiatives, please visit us online at www.cmepeg.org.

On The Hill ...

The board and staff of CMEP made more than 70 formal visits to Representatives, Senators and their staff last year, and continue to inform and educate Members of Congress with timely letters, useful background materials, and analyses, including CMEP’s monthly “Info Update”.

In 2007, CMEP increased its collaborative work with collegial Jewish and Arab-American organizations to support constructive bipartisan congressional initiatives on Israeli-Palestinian peace. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Richard Lugar (R-IN) introduced an important resolution in June that re-affirmed the Senate’s commitment to a two-state solution and urged a robust U.S. diplomatic effort. Through the work of CMEP and its allies, the resolution was co-sponsored by 38 Senators, many of them holding key leadership roles. On the House side, CMEP rallied support for a sign-on letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice led by Representatives Gary Ackerman (D-NY) and Charles Boustany (R-LA). The letter supported the Annapolis peace conference and funding to the Palestinians and represented the first Jewish-Arab-led congressional initiative on Israeli-Palestinian peace in years, if ever. The letter garnered 135 signers, exceeding all previous pro-peace efforts in the House. In November, CMEP co-hosted a successful Hill briefing with prominent experts on “Digesting Annapolis: What Happened, What it Means, and What Happens Next?”.

CMEP continued to raise awareness of urgent issues affecting Jerusalem and the situation of Palestinian Christians. In June, CMEP opposed H. Con. Res. 152, a problematic House resolution that failed to recognize the need for a negotiated outcome for Jerusalem’s future. Several Members made excellent statements on the record, representing one of the most constructive congressional debates on the issue of Jerusalem. In December, CMEP welcomed a letter to President Bush by Senators Kit Bond (R-MO) and Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) that brought to the President’s attention the increasing emigration of Palestinian Christians and the importance of a peaceful resolution of the conflict in preserving this historic community.

At the White House and Administration & on the Campaign Trail ...

CMEP staff, Board, and Leadership Council members maintained regular communications with U.S. officials at the State Department and the White House. In May, Robert Danin, Deputy Assistant Secretary, addressed the CMEP advocacy conference, and in June the CMEP Leadership Council met with Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns.

In January 2007, CMEP organized an ecumenical Christian letter to President Bush asking him to make Israeli-Palestinian peace an urgent priority for the last two years of his Administration. The letter was signed by 39 Orthodox, Catholic, mainstream and evangelical Protestant leaders, and was featured in a full-page ad in the Capitol Hill newspaper, *Roll Call*. In addition, the CMEP Board and Heads of Churches sent letters on other pressing issues including: U.S. diplomacy with Iran and Syria; the unity of the Palestinian people and future state following the Hamas take-over of Gaza; the status of Jerusalem and the impact of Israeli settlement construction; the announcement of increased U.S. arms sales and military aid to the Middle East; and issues prior to and following the Annapolis peace conference.

In August, CMEP Board and Leadership Council members sent a letter to all the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates urging them to promise leadership on Holy Land peace and rise above polemical rhetoric. The letter was followed up with further communication with the foreign policy advisors of the major campaigns.

NEW Policy Analysis Guides!

CMEP created and distributed four important new Policy Analysis Guides last year:

- *Holy Land Peacemaking on Center Stage in 2008*
- *Two State Solution Remains the Only Option to End the Conflict*
- *Christian Advocates Compete for Ear, and Heart, of Policymakers*
- *Hopes and Challenges Flow from Arab Diplomatic Surge*

International Activities ...

CMEP strives to create an ongoing dialogue with Israeli, Palestinian, and religious leaders working in the region and Washington policymakers as a way to promote peace and encourage leaders to aim for a peaceful solution.

CMEP assisted in the coordination of meetings for various experts from the region enabling them to share their expertise on the peace process, Jerusalem, and humanitarian concerns, including Daniel Seidemann, an Israeli attorney and expert on Jerusalem, Tom Garafolo, Jerusalem representative for Catholic Relief Services, Mossi Raz and Nidal Fuqaha, Israeli and Palestinian representatives of the Geneva Initiative, and Mark Brown, Jerusalem representative for the Lutheran World Federation.

In The Field ...

Our grassroots email advocacy messages advise a growing number of concerned citizens, engaged activists, and church leaders, and decision makers from across the country. These alerts and messages provide timely advocacy guidance, useful news and information, and key tools to help make the call for peace heard at the highest levels of government. We issued over 120 reliable and timely email alerts in 2007. In other activities:

- CMEP mobilized support for the Annapolis peace conference, creating a Congregational resource that included a Prayer for Peace and Bulletin Announcement.
- Organized a Middle East-focused advocacy conference in Washington that drew more than 150 attendees including church members and clergy from 26 states. Conference participants held meetings with more than 70 House and Senate offices.
- Launched a new CMEP conference call grassroots program featuring prominent policy analysts and issue experts offering their perspectives and providing timely updates on key developments in Washington and the region. Two CMEP Leadership Council members, Ambassador (ret.) Philip Wilcox of the Foundation for Middle East Peace and Professor Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland, were among the first speakers discussing issues related to the Annapolis conference.

Welcome to new CMEP Members, Partners and Executive Director!

- Leadership Council Members – Betty Sams and Former Senator Lincoln Chafee
- CMEP Partners – Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church (Denver), Sharing Jerusalem USA
- **CMEP Welcomed Warren Clark as new Executive Director and Bid Farewell to Longtime Director Corinne Whitlatch.** Ambassador (ret). Warren Clark comes to CMEP with the dual experience of theological training at Virginia Theological Seminary and years of service as a career diplomat at the U.S. State Department.