Twilight of Hope for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

Twilight has fallen on the possibility of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders committed to peace, we urge immediate, sustained U.S. leadership before darkness falls on the hopes for a peaceful resolution.

We recently witnessed shadows of dusk. We mourn for the lives lost and shattered during the violence that gripped southern Israel and Gaza. What we have seen, recently and before, will keep happening if movement towards a viable two state-solution continues to stagnate. The status quo is unsustainable and dangerous to both Israelis and Palestinians. Now is not the time for another cycle of recriminations. It is time to break the cycle of violence with bold initiatives for peace.

The current dangerous stalemate, including the legacy of past failed peacemaking efforts, undermines our security and that of others, destabilizes the region, fuels terrorism and extremism, allows continuing Israeli settlement expansion, and prolongs Palestinian disunity. These realities and the absence of negotiations threaten to kill the prospect of a viable two-state peace agreement, the only realistic solution to the conflict.

As people of faith, we proclaim that we should never underestimate what is possible. Egypt and the United States helped achieve a ceasefire in Gaza. With the support of the international community, Israelis and Palestinians can achieve a lasting peace. A new dawn is possible.

As members of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI), we affirm President Obama’s support for a negotiated two-state peace agreement that provides for a secure and recognized Israel living in peace alongside a viable and independent Palestinian state.

We know the challenges are daunting, but we believe a bold new initiative for an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement should be an immediate priority of the new Administration in 2013. We fear the opportunity for a peaceful resolution is rapidly waning and the current stagnation encourages the rejectionists on both sides. Our nation has unique leverage and credibility in the region. Indeed, no past progress towards peace has occurred in this conflict without U.S. leadership, facilitation or staunch support. Once again, we need active, fair and firm U.S. leadership to help break the current deadlock and to achieve a two-state peace agreement now before it is too late.

The Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders of NILI are committed to mobilizing broad public support for U.S. leadership for peace. We will mobilize the strong support that exists in churches, synagogues and mosques across the country.

Twilight is upon us; but the hope for a new dawn remains. Let us together bring the new light of hope and work for negotiations leading to a final status agreement.

January 2013
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List of Endorsers

**Christian Leaders:**
Bishop Richard E. Pates, D.D., Chairman, USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace
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Reverend Geoffrey Black, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ
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Rabbi Elliot Dorff, Ph.D. Rector and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, American Jewish University
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Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, National Director, Islamic Society of North America
Naeem Baig, Executive Director, Islamic Circle of North America
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Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim Chaplain, Georgetown University
Dawud Assad, President Emeritus, Council of Mosques, USA
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