

April 5, 2010

Dear Mr. President,

As leaders of major Christian faith communities in America we write to express our strong support for your Administration's bold efforts to restart negotiations aimed at a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land. We applaud your efforts to halt settlement construction in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Palestinian territories, and we join you in seeking a comprehensive agreement that ends the occupation, provides security and recognition for Israel, and establishes a viable, secure and independent Palestinian state.

We believe that with your strong leadership these negotiations can lead to an accord soon that ends the conflict and achieves both the Palestinian goal of an independent, secure and viable state and Israel's goal of a secure state with recognized borders.

New construction or settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank undermines the mutual trust that is a necessary condition for successful negotiations. In this regard, the announcement of March 9 for new housing in East Jerusalem is unacceptable. The expansion of settlements endangers efforts to start the proximity talks that are to be the first step towards direct negotiations on all final status issues that include borders, refugees, security, and a shared Jerusalem.

We cannot permit the benefits of reconciliation and peace to be undermined by fear. Continued violence only strengthens rejectionists on both sides. We also condemn therefore all violence such as that which led to four Palestinian deaths recently in the West Bank and a rogue rocket attack that killed a worker in southern Israel. Authorities on both sides must take steps to avoid provocations and maintain order.

This is an important moment in the struggle to end the occupation and achieve a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land – a restoration of right relationships that will allow Israel and the Palestinians to live in peace with each other and their neighbors.

Continuing U.S. involvement –with necessary support from the U.S. Congress and U.S. public opinion—will be needed to help both sides resolve complex issues. We pledge to give you every possible support in this effort and to join with our Jewish and Muslim colleagues to help work for that goal.

Sincerely,

[See the next page for a list of signers, including Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Ken Hackett, President of Catholic Relief Services.]

**Archbishop Vicken Aykazian**  
Armenian Orthodox Church

**Dr. Ray Bakke**  
Chancellor, Bakke Graduate University  
Chair, Evangelicals for Middle East  
Understanding

**Rev. Geoffrey Black**  
General Minister and President  
United Church of Christ

**Bishop Wayne Burkette**  
Moravian Church in America, Southern  
Province

**Very Rev. Thomas Cassidy, SCJ**  
President  
Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of  
Men's Institutes

**Rev. Paula Clayton Dempsey**  
Minister for Partnership Relations  
Alliance of Baptists

**Marie Dennis**  
Director  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concern

**Rev. Gerard Dykstra**  
Executive Director  
Christian Reformed Church in North America

**Sister Donna Graham, OSF**  
President  
English-speaking Conference, JPIC Council  
Franciscan Friars (OFM)

**Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson**  
General Secretary  
Reformed Church in America

**Ken Hackett**  
President  
Catholic Relief Services

**The Rev. Mark S. Hanson**  
Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America

**Most Rev. Howard J. Hubbard,**  
Bishop of Albany  
Chairman, Committee on International Justice  
and Peace  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

**The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts  
Schori**  
Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church

**Rev. Michael Kinnamon, Ph.D.**  
General Secretary  
National Council of the Churches of Christ in  
the USA

**Clifton Kirkpatrick**  
President  
World Alliance of Reformed Churches

**Rev. John L. McCullough**  
Executive Director and CEO  
Church World Service

**Mary Ellen McNish**  
General Secretary  
American Friends Service Committee

**Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer**  
President  
The Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church

**Rev. Gradye Parsons**  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

**Rolando L. Santiago**  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Central Committee US

**Robert Seiple**  
Former Ambassador-at-large for  
International Religious Freedom

**Ronald J. Sider**  
President  
Evangelicals for Social Action

**Joe Volk**  
Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

**Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins**  
General Minister and President  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)