

Concern for Peace in the Middle East:

A Statement of the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops March 14, 2012

During the meeting of the Administrative Committee of the U.S. Bishops, the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East were never far from our minds, hearts and prayers. The daily reports of conflicts, turmoil, bloodshed and violence can leave no one indifferent and unconcerned. With Pope Benedict we share a special bond with our brother bishops, especially of the churches of the East who continue to guide their precious faithful and care for them in the most difficult of circumstances. We are one with them in their witness of opposition to violence from any quarter and in their appeals for peace for all peoples and nations in the Middle East.

While we have a special bond with the suffering Christians throughout the Middle East, our care extends to all peoples of every faith and every nationality. We urge a change of heart and mind on the part of all those who sow division and hatred. We plead with leaders of nations to show respect for the rights and dignity of all the citizens of their respective countries. We insist that peace, which is ultimately a gift of God, must be made the goal of every nation not only internally but in consort with all the nations and peoples of the region.

When innocent women and children are slaughtered, when journalists are killed pursuing their profession, when the defenseless are cut down on their way to work or even in their homes, then those responsible must be brought to reasonable justice. Violence so often leads to more violence. War is always a loss for humanity whether it be civil and internal or nation to nation.

In a time of political uncertainty, economic suffering and social and cultural crisis, men and women of good will must reach across the divisions that have separated them and become peacemakers refusing to be caught up in the whirlwind of hatred and death that violence sustains. As bishops of the Catholic Church, we urge our brothers and sisters in the Christian Churches as well as all our brothers and sisters and the religious leaders of all faiths to renew their commitment to work together, to pray and to use all their good offices to offer an alternative to division, conflict and violence. May their words and their example be heeded by one and all including nations outside the Middle East whose own words and actions must serve reconciliation and not division, mutual respect and not hatred, justice and not violence. In this way conflicts might be resolved by peaceful means and peace based on justice, freedom and security might be the new heritage of all the peoples and nations of the Middle East.