



**TAKE ACTION!!**

January 8, 2009

## Call Congress: Urge Statements in Support of Cease-Fire

**TAKE ACTION NOW!** Call your Members of Congress today to urge their support for U.S. efforts to achieve an immediate, comprehensive cease-fire between Hamas and Israel.

**WHY IS THIS ACTION IMPORTANT NOW?** Members of Congress are being urged to issue one-sided statements with no mention of the urgent need for a comprehensive cease-fire that will end the human suffering on both sides. Legislation making a similar point is expected in both the House and the Senate.

It is important that your Representative and Senators hear from you now on the need for U.S. diplomatic leadership to help achieve an immediate cease-fire that ends the violence, addresses the humanitarian situation and leads to concrete steps toward a two-state peace agreement.

Several Members have made [constructive statements](#), but many more have not. They need to hear from Catholics that expressing sympathy for only one side of the conflict is not compassionate or smart policy. What is needed now is strong U.S. leadership that pulls Israelis and Palestinians back from the brink and puts them on a path toward an agreement that creates a viable Palestinian state and enhance Israel's security.

**TALKING POINTS:** As an American Catholic, I deplore the tragic loss of life of civilians caught in the escalating violence in Gaza and southern Israel and care deeply about the welfare of both Israelis and Palestinians who are suffering and living in fear.

I ask that if and when the Senator/Representative makes a statement about the current crisis, he/she expresses support for strong U.S. diplomatic leadership, together with international partners, to achieve an immediate, comprehensive cease-fire that:

- ends the escalating violence between Israel and Hamas;
- addresses the humanitarian situation - including an opening of the border crossings that provides relief for the people of Gaza and meets Israel's security needs; and
- leads to concrete steps toward a two-state peace agreement - the best hope for long-term stability and security for Israel and the Palestinians.

**WHAT DOES PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND HAVE TO DO WITH MY FAITH?** The U.S. Bishops wrote in their 1983 pastoral letter, [The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response](#), "Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith. We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus."

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has called on the international community to help Israelis and Palestinians discard the "dead end" of violence and pursue instead "the path of dialogue and negotiations." Immediate, visible and decisive U.S. leadership is urgently needed.

In a December 30 letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, USCCB, wrote: "At a time when the attention of Christians is drawn naturally to the birthplace of the Prince of Peace, it is tragic that innocent civilians are once again the victims of armed conflict and a humanitarian crisis. A ceasefire and humanitarian relief are indispensable initial steps on the road to a two-state solution—a secure Israel living in peace with a viable Palestinian state—with justice and peace for both peoples."

**WHAT IS CRS DOING TO ADDRESS THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND?** The continued insecurity of the environment makes the coordination of aid distribution incredibly difficult. CRS is working with local partners in Gaza including the Missionaries of Charity to prioritize needs and areas of intervention. On Saturday, January 3, before the airstrikes intensified, CRS coordinated delivery of a limited supply of bottled water, cooking gas, diapers and food to partners in Gaza.

To learn more visit: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/mideast.shtml> and <http://crs.org/Jerusalem/>.

**For more information contact:**

Dr. Stephen Colecchi, Director, International Justice and Peace, USCCB, [scolecchi@usccb.org](mailto:scolecchi@usccb.org), (202) 541-3196  
Tina Rodousakis, Grassroots Advocacy Manager, CRS, [trodousa@crs.org](mailto:trodousa@crs.org); (410) 951-7462