



# **Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land Resource Packet In Partnership with the National Interreligious Initiative for Peace in the Middle East**

## **Introduction:**

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land is part of an unprecedented interreligious initiative. This initiative engages Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders and communities in a coordinated effort to promote a just peace in the Middle East. No religious community alone can accomplish the goal of bringing peace with justice to the land that is holy to all of us. The Catholic Campaign also builds upon and complements the ongoing efforts of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to pursue a just peace.

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land calls on diocesan bishops and Catholic leaders to partner actively with local religious leaders in the Jewish, Muslim and other Christian traditions. The goal is to create a shared commitment to the broad outlines of a just resolution of the conflict and to raise a united voice with policy makers and the wider public.

## **Why a Catholic Campaign?**

We launch this Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Middle East for at least three reasons. Our faith demands it. Our Church's leaders call us to it. Our Church is well situated to build bridges.

Our teaching calls us to be peacemakers (cf. Matthew 5:9). As the U.S. Bishops wrote in *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. The content and context of our peacemaking is set, not by some political agenda or ideological program, but by the teaching of his Church" (#333).

The leaders of our Church have repeatedly pointed out the importance of resolving the conflict in the Holy Land. Pope Benedict XVI, in his address on July 20, 2006, declared:

I appeal to Israeli and Palestinian leaders that, with the generous help of the international community, they may seek responsibly for that negotiated end to the conflict, which alone can ensure the peace to which their people aspire.

Finally, the Catholic Church can make a unique contribution to the peace process. Vatican Council II set us on a new course in our relationships with the Jewish and Muslim communities. In *Nostra Aetate*, the Church declared its "esteem" for Muslims and "the bond that spiritually ties" us to the Jewish people (# 3, 4). Many Catholic leaders have worked to build strong relationships with both Jews and Muslims, laying a foundation for the work of peace. At local dioceses across the country, the Catholic Church often has good relationships with Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders. These strong relationships can help us to convene others in pursuit of peace in the land we all call holy.

### **Why a Catholic Campaign now?**

The year the campaign began, 2005, was a significant time to begin to pursue peace in the Middle East with renewed vigor. At the beginning of 2006, Pope Benedict XVI reminded Catholics of the “very tentative steps forward along the road to peace” in the Holy Land. The tragic events of 2006 and 2007 reinforced the importance of a renewed initiative for peace. War between Hezbollah and Israel in Lebanon, armed conflict with Hamas in Gaza, and fighting among Palestinian factions all pointed to the urgency for a resolution to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick expressed our present hopes well when he stated, “We gather at a time of crisis in the Middle East. But times of crisis can also become opportunities for change.” The events and suffering in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Israel demonstrate once again that there is no such thing as a safe, stable status quo in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that there is no military solution to the conflicts. The only solution is a negotiated one based on U.N. Security Council Resolutions, realistic compromises, and monitored security arrangements with international guarantees.

### **What difference can a Catholic Campaign make?**

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land aims to work in collaboration with religious leaders of the three traditions that are rooted in the Middle East. To that interreligious effort we bring our commitments to peace and to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. We also bring the experience and teachings of our Church, a Church committed to its roots in the Holy Land and with a significant national and global presence.

### **What does the Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Middle East ask of local dioceses?**

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Middle East asks local bishops and diocesan leaders to convene or join local interreligious initiatives for peace modeled on the national initiative. The resources in this web-based packet provide guidance and background material for such efforts. We also ask local dioceses to organize letter writing campaigns and to respond to action alerts sent by the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. We ask you to share contact information with us so that we can engage you in these and similar activities at critical junctures in the peace process. Visit this website for materials and to sign up for alerts on the Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land:

[www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml).

### **Where can a local diocese get information and support?**

For support from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, contact:  
Dr. Stephen M. Colecchi, Director  
Office of International Justice and Peace  
Mr. John Carr, Executive Director  
Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development  
3211 Fourth Street NE  
Washington, DC 20017-1194  
Telephone: (202) 541-3196  
Fax: (202) 541-3339  
Email: [scolecchi@usccb.org](mailto:scolecchi@usccb.org)  
Department Website: <http://www.usccb.org/jphd/>  
Campaign Website:  
[www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml)

For support from the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East:  
Mr. Ron Young, Consultant  
National Interreligious Leadership Initiative  
for Peace in the Middle East  
16020 94th Avenue NW  
Stanwood, WA 98290  
Telephone/Fax: (360) 652-4285  
E-Mail: [usicpme@aol.com](mailto:usicpme@aol.com)



**Contents of the Web Based Resource Packet**  
[http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml)

**1. National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East**

This two-page flyer describes the National Initiative; it serves as the model for similar local initiatives.

**2. A Nationwide Network of Local Interreligious Initiatives Working for Peace in the Middle East**

This two-page flyer describes how a Local Interreligious Initiative can be modeled on the National Initiative. The flyer ought to be shared with religious leaders early on. It is important that they discuss and adopt the “Principles of Cooperation” and the general framework of the statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace.” This flyer also answers the question: What can we do? It suggests specific “can do” activities, including: holding a press conference, writing an Op-Ed, meeting with members of Congress, and holding forums and other educational programs.

**3. National Interreligious Leadership List**

This one-page document lists the 35 religious leaders who affirmed the “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope” statement that was released on December 12, 2006. The Catholic leaders who signed for the U.S. bishops were: Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Cardinal William Keeler and Francis Cardinal George. It may be helpful to share this list with local religious leaders so that they can see the broad support the National Initiative enjoys.

**4. Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope**

On December 12, 2006, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope” was issued by 35 Jewish, Christian, and Muslim national religious leaders. The statement urges the United States government to make peace in the Middle East an urgent priority. The statement lists steps the United States, Israel, Palestine, and the Arab states can take to advance towards peace in the region.

**5. Appeals to U.S. Leadership**

In these appeals, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim national religious leaders urge the U.S. to exercise stronger leadership along the road to peace until the goal of a viable two-state solution is achieved.

**6. Twelve Urgent Steps for Peace**

This four-page resource, adopted on December 2, 2003, lays out a step-by-step framework for peace. Individual religious leaders may legitimately hold differing perspectives on one or another aspect of this document, but the basic framework of verifiable step-by-step commitments is important to adopt.

**7. Sample Press Release**

This Sample Press Release can be adapted by a Local Interreligious Initiative when they publicly join the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative and endorse its statements.

## **8. Guidelines for Supporting the National Interreligious Initiative**

These guidelines are offered for speaking (or writing) in support of the statements of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative with members of Congress and/or representatives of the media.

## **9. Sample Op-Eds**

These two sample Op-Eds originally appeared in *Tidings*, Southern California's Catholic Weekly, on January 5, 2007, and the *Seattle Times* on January 11, 2005. They serve as examples of the kind of Op-Eds that can be written locally.

## **10. Prayers for Peace in the Middle East**

These prayers remind us of the importance of rooting our work in prayer and spirituality. All gatherings of Local Interreligious Initiatives should incorporate a spirit of prayer.

## **11. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Background Documents**

These documents provide background on selected activities of the USCCB and an overview of the USCCB position on the Holy Land.

- a. Remarks by Cardinal William Keeler, National Press Club, January 12, 2005
- b. Statement read by Bishop William Skylstad to Presidents of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, January 11 and 13, 2005
- c. Remarks by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, National Press Club, December 2, 2003
- d. Statement on Israeli-Palestinian Violence by the USCCB Administrative Committee, March 13, 2002
- e. A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, June 15, 2001

## **12. National Interreligious Leadership Initiative Background Documents**

### **a. Summary of the Geneva Accord**

This is an Israeli-Palestinian Civil Society Initiative that serves as a model framework for peace. It is not necessary for participants to endorse all aspects of this framework. It is for background only.

### **b. The People's Voice Peace Initiative**

This is another Civil Society Initiative that serves as a model framework for peace. It is not necessary for participants to endorse all aspects of this framework. It is for background only.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## **National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East**

On December 2, 2003, in a widely reported national press conference, thirty-three of the nation's most prominent Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders announced a new, unprecedented collaborative effort to mobilize broad public support for active, fair and firm U.S. leadership in pursuit of Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace. The leaders sent letters to President Bush and to every member of Congress. In June, 2004 a delegation of the national leaders met with Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Since its creation, the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East has sent several letters to President Bush, former Secretary Colin Powell, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to call for stronger U.S. leadership for peace. These appeals urge the Administration to make Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace a top priority of U.S. policy. Simultaneously, these appeals have been endorsed by local Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders in cities across the country where local interreligious initiatives are organized modeled on the national initiative. Local religious leaders have pressed their Senators and Representatives to support the Initiative's message.

In his New York Times religion column (12/6/03), "Mideast Initiative Pushes Beyond Platitudes," Peter Steinfels wrote that what makes the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative different is "who these religious leaders are, what they said, and what they plan to do."

In December 2006, in the wake of a particularly turbulent year for Israelis and Palestinians the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative issued the statement, "Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope." This statement represented a remarkable consensus, especially considering the tragic events of the past year, and again called upon the United States to make peace a priority in the Middle East. The statement was sent to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice requesting a meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East. On January 29, 2007 leaders from the Initiative met with Secretary Rice to express their concerns and to offer their support for strong U.S. leadership for peace.

### **Who Are the Religious Leaders?**

**Christian leaders** include two Roman Catholic Cardinals, the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Primate of the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic Churches, heads of the Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, United Methodist, United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Protestant denominations, the President of the National Council of Churches, three other prominent Christian evangelical leaders, and editors of influential national Christian publications.

**Jewish leaders** include the President and Executive Vice President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Executive Vice President of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the President and Past President of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, the Rector of the University of Judaism, the President of the Union for Reform Judaism, the Dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, the Executive Vice President of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, the Vice President of A Different Future, a Member of the Council for a Parliament of World Religions, and the Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

**Muslims leaders** include leaders of the largest national Muslim organizations – the National Director and Vice President of the Islamic Society of North America, the General Secretary of the Islamic Circle of North America, the President Emeritus of the Council of Mosques, the Muslim Chaplain of Georgetown University, and leaders of United Muslims of America and the American Society for Muslim Advancement.

### **What They Are Saying - "Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope"**

In their December 2003 consensus statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope,” the religious leaders call for the United States to make peace in the Middle East an urgent priority. The Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders are united in working together for peace with justice for Israelis, Palestinians and all peoples in the Middle East. The leaders believe that America has an inescapable responsibility and an indispensable role to provide creative, determined leadership for building a just peace for all in the Middle East. They believe that achieving Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace will have positive reverberations in the region and around the world.

The leaders also state that military action will not resolve the conflict. The only authentic way forward is a negotiated settlement built on difficult, but realistic, compromises and security arrangements with international guarantees. The path to peace requires a rejection of violence and an embrace of dialogue. This path demands reciprocal steps that build confidence on all sides. Such a path could lead to a future of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace with security and dignity for both peoples and to a future of stability in the region with Israel living in peace and security with its Arab neighbors.

### **What They Plan To Do and What You Can Do**

- Call the President (202) 456-1111 or E-Mail: [President@whitehouse.gov](mailto:President@whitehouse.gov) and your Senators and Representative to voice support for the statements of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative and urge the U.S government to make peace in the Middle East an urgent priority.
- Utilize church, synagogue and mosque newsletters, e-mail lists and websites to build a broad, interfaith public voice for peace. Urge your congregation/community to endorse the Initiative and help communicate its message to the White House and Congress.
- Publicize Israeli-Palestinian peace initiatives, e.g. sponsor a forum on the Geneva Accord, People's Voice, and/or One Voice.
- Join or help create a local interreligious initiative with local religious leaders, modeled on the national initiative. Call (360) 652-4285 or E-Mail [usicpme@aol.com](mailto:usicpme@aol.com) for help in forming a local initiative.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## **A Nationwide Network of Local Interreligious Initiatives Working for Peace in the Middle East**

### **Purpose**

Efforts are underway to develop a nationwide network of local interreligious initiatives modeled on the National Initiative, involving local Christian judicatory heads, prominent Pastors, Priests, Rabbis and Imams. In some local areas, an already established interfaith group might take on this role; in other areas local Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders could create an *ad hoc* committee. The primary purpose is to build a broad, active interreligious constituency to support creative, determined U.S. leadership for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace. Local initiatives could also develop relationships with Arab-Jewish peace and reconciliation projects.

Leaders of local interreligious initiatives agree to adopt the "Principles of Cooperation," affirm the statement, "Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope," and agree to endorse the "Twelve Steps for Peace" and the appeals to the U.S. Administration as guidelines for addressing issues.

### **Principles of Cooperation**

- We are American Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders who believe working together for Arab-Israeli peace reflects fundamental teachings in our religious traditions.
- Recognizing and appreciating the bonds many of us have with people on each side of the conflict and how these sometimes cause us to have different and conflicting viewpoints, we believe our areas of agreement are more important than our disagreements, and we commit ourselves to work conscientiously and sensitively to emphasize our common agenda for peace.
- As American religious leaders, echoing the Alexandria Declaration by Middle Eastern Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders, we unequivocally condemn killing of innocents and call for an end to all acts of violence. What each side needs most - real security for Israelis and an end of occupation for Palestinians - cannot be achieved by violence but only by negotiations.
- We support a viable, independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, with enduring peace and security for both peoples.
- We are encouraged by many Israelis and Palestinians who are working together for peace, and we believe that model peace agreements such as the Geneva Accord and People's Voice initiative, as well as earlier official Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian negotiations, provide benchmarks, principles and ideas for peace agreements which could be acceptable to majorities on both sides.
- We support U.S. leadership for peace, coordinated with the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations, and consistent with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397. We believe active, determined U.S. leadership and vigorous public monitoring are essential to achieving full implementation of a two state solution.

•We join together to learn from each other and to work in support of active, fair and firm U.S. efforts to help Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab states achieve peace. We seek by our prayers and active work together to build bridges in our communities and broad interreligious cooperation and action for peace.

### **What Local Interreligious "Walk the Road to Peace" Initiatives Can Do**

Local initiatives will decide what activities would be most effective in their communities. Suggestions for activities include three categories: education, advocacy and partnership building for peace.

- Getting started, local religious leaders join together supporting the “Principles of Cooperation,” and the statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope;” they launch their local initiative with a press conference and possibly an op-ed article or a newspaper ad signed by the leaders.
- Organize a forum with a speaker from the National Initiative and a panel of local Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders as respondents.
- Publicize the Interreligious Initiative and an appeal to the U.S. Administration in local congregations. Sponsor a public interreligious witness, possibly a "Walk for Peace" or a caravan from a synagogue to a church or a mosque.
- Arrange for a local interreligious team to meet with your Senators and Representatives to inform them of the initiative and urge their support for active, determined U.S. leadership, including support of the statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope,” the appeals to the President, and the “Twelve Steps for Peace.”
- Invite Israeli and Palestinian speakers, e.g., from the Geneva Accord, People's Voice, One Voice, and Parents Circle (Bereaved Families).
- Develop a connection and build an ongoing partnership between your community and one or more of the Arab-Jewish peace and reconciliation projects, provide support for their work, including publicity, fundraising, etc.

**To support the National Initiative or for more information about developing a local initiative,  
contact Ron Young, Consultant  
National Interreligious Initiative for Peace, (360) 652-4285 or [usicpme@aol.com](mailto:usicpme@aol.com)**



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East

### Christian Leaders

His Eminence, Theodore Cardinal McCarrick  
Archbishop of Washington

His Eminence, William Cardinal Keeler  
Archbishop of Baltimore

His Eminence, Francis Cardinal George, President  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Reverend Michael E. Livingston, President  
National Council of Churches USA

Bishop Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Reverend John Thomas, General Minister & President  
United Church of Christ

Ann B. Sherer, Bishop  
The United Methodist Church

The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister, President  
Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)

His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios, Primate  
Greek Orthodox Church in America

His Eminence, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate  
Armenian Apostolic Church in America

Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding  
Bishop, Episcopal Church

The Reverend Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Reverend John M. Buchanan, Editor & Publisher  
Christian Century

Richard J. Mouw, President  
Fuller Theological Seminary

The Reverend Leighton Ford, President  
Leighton Ford Ministries

David Neff, Editor and Vice-President  
Christianity Today

### Jewish Leaders

Rabbi Harry K. Danziger, President  
Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform)

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, Executive Vice President  
Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform)

Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein, Executive Vice President  
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Rabbi Brant Rosen, President  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Rabbi Elliot Dorff, Rector  
University of Judaism (Conservative)

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director,  
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Rabbi Alvin M. Sugarman, Vice President  
A Different Future

Rabbi Eric Yoffie, President  
Union for Reform Judaism

Rabbi Peter Knobel, Member  
Council for a Parliament of World Religions

Rabbi Merle S. Singer  
Temple Beth El, Boca Raton, Florida (Reform)

Rabbi Amy Small, Past President  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, Dean  
Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies (Conservative)

Dr. Carl Sheingold, Executive Vice President  
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

### Muslim Leaders

Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, National Director  
Islamic Society of North America

Naim Baig, General Secretary  
Islamic Circle of North America

Iftekhhar A. Hai, Founding Director  
United Muslims of America

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Founder  
American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA)

Imam Mohammed ibn Hagmagid, Vice President  
Islamic Society of North America

Dawud A. Assad, President Emeritus  
Council of Mosques, USA

Imam Yahya Hendi, Chaplain  
Georgetown University



## **Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope**

*Jewish, Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders  
Call on the United States to Make Peace a Priority*

*December 12, 2006*

### **Preamble**

As Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders, our shared Abrahamic faith compels us to work together for peace with justice for Israelis, Palestinians and all peoples in the Middle East. As Americans, we again ask the United States to make peace in the Middle East an urgent priority. Our nation has an inescapable responsibility and an indispensable role to provide creative, determined leadership for building a just peace for all in the Middle East.

### **Peace: An Essential of Faith**

Our faith traditions hold that every human being is created in the image of God, that human life and dignity are to be respected, and that all persons are children of the One God. This common religious heritage - which we trace to Abraham - finds expression in a common commitment to peace with justice for all God's children.

The prophet Isaiah links peace with justice. Of those who do not know peace, the prophet warns: "The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace" (Isaiah 59:8). As religious leaders we must heed the call to walk the road of justice to peace and call on others, especially our nation's leaders, to do the same.

Violence, especially against civilians, violates the dignity of the human person and is incompatible with the peace God desires for each of God's children. Our traditions share the belief that each of us is called to pursue peace. Jesus of Nazareth expressed this call in these words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Building peace through justice is simultaneously an urgent human challenge and a gift of God. As the Holy Koran articulates it, God is the "Source of Peace, Guardian of Faith, Preserver of Safety" (59.23). It is God who calls us to walk the just road to peace with all peoples and who makes that path possible, even when, as today, the way forward may seem unclear.

## **A Priority for Our Nation**

The National Interreligious Initiative for Peace in the Middle East unites the voices of religious leaders of more than twenty-five Jewish, Christian and Muslim national organizations. Beginning in December 2003, we called upon the United States to exercise leadership at the highest levels to secure a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians through concrete support for the Road Map and “12 Steps for Peace.” We have been disappointed that the United States did not more actively pursue the Road Map for Peace which we felt held great promise. While much has changed since December 2003, our fundamental call for the United States to more fully engage in the work for a two-state solution to the conflict has not.

Palestinian and Israeli elections have changed the political landscape. The crises in and near Gaza and the war in Lebanon have cost many lives, destroyed communities, displaced peoples, deepened animosities, and diminished prospects for a negotiated peace.

**At this time of crisis and danger, we must speak a word of hope.** It is our conviction that the current crisis can also open up new opportunities for peace. Our shared faith in the One God gives us hope and reminds us that God is on the side of peace. Hatred will not have the final word. We are one human family, and people ultimately want the same things for their own families--peace, security, dignity, opportunity.

The unique role of the United States in the region and in the world gives our nation a special responsibility to pursue peace. The United States must make peace in the Middle East an urgent priority. Achieving Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace will have positive reverberations in the region and around the world. Our nation and the world will be much safer if peace takes hold in the Middle East.

## **A Way Forward**

The crisis in Gaza and the war in Lebanon and northern Israel remind us that the status quo in the region is unstable and untenable. Military action will not resolve the conflict. The only authentic way forward is a negotiated settlement built on difficult, but realistic, compromises and security arrangements with international guarantees. The path to peace requires a rejection of violence and an embrace of dialogue. This path demands reciprocal steps that build confidence on all sides. Such a path could lead to a future of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace with security and dignity for both peoples and to a future of stability in the region with Israel living in peace and security with its Arab neighbors.

As Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders we are not naïve about the obstacles that lie ahead. We have longstanding and precious ties to peoples and communities on various sides of the conflict in the Middle East. These ties help us to appreciate the different narratives of Israelis, Palestinians and other Arabs. Each community has authentic stories of suffering and legitimate aspirations. We know that these different narratives can pull us apart, but we

choose to stand together. We also know from experience that demonizing the other or seeking simply to lay blame does not move us along the path toward peace.

The way forward requires that we listen and learn from each other. The way forward requires that we work together for active, fair and firm U.S. leadership to help Israelis, Palestinians and Arab states achieve a just peace. We seek by our prayers and by our work together to build bridges among our communities and to generate interreligious cooperation and action for peace.

### **Elements of a Way Forward**

**We call on the United States to:**

- **Make peace in the Middle East a top priority and exercise persistent, determined leadership at the highest levels to secure a just peace.**
- **Work, in coordination with the Quartet (U.S., European Union, Russia, United Nations), to create conditions that bring about serious negotiations on a two-state solution following the lines of the Roadmap, including:**

resolving the crisis in Gaza; finding appropriately monitored ways to provide urgently needed humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinian people; achieving an effective Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire; urging Hamas to reject violence, recognize Israel and accept previous agreements; urging Israel to take steps to support the prospect of a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza ; and calling on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to meet in order to restart negotiations on a viable two-state solution.

- **Build upon principles, benchmarks and practical ideas for peace that emerged from earlier initiatives.** Helpful concepts can still be found in the Geneva Accord and People's Voice model peace agreements, as well as in the "Road Map" itself. These benchmarks suggest realistic compromises for final status issues, including: borders and security arrangements, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem. Building public support for these ideas can help convince people that peace is possible and help our religious communities, the media, and political leaders focus on realistic solutions for peace.
- **Explore bold initiatives for peace such as appointing a special envoy, hosting an international conference, and/or forming mutually acceptable security arrangements for a negotiated two-state solution.** U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397 (supporting a two-state solution) provide the internationally agreed framework for comprehensive and lasting Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 provide a framework for resolving the situation in Lebanon .
- **Work with Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to the Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.**
- **Support full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 in relation to Lebanon.** The United States and the international community must not

lose focus, as has happened after earlier crises. The United States, in coordination with the U.N. Security Council, must work with determination to maintain the current ceasefire, secure the release of kidnapped Israeli soldiers, resolve the issue of release of Lebanese prisoners detained by Israel, and support the expanded U.N. peacekeeping force working with the Lebanese army to assert exclusive Lebanese government authority throughout southern Lebanon. Consistent with Security Council Resolution 1559, the U.S. should also support disarmament of the Hezbollah militia, an Israeli withdrawal to the international border, a permanent ceasefire, and significant reconstruction assistance for Lebanon.

- **Provide necessary and generous bilateral reconstruction assistance to Lebanon to help rebuild the civilian infrastructure and restore devastated communities, and aid to Israel to help rebuild communities that experienced destruction due to the war.** It is critical that significant concrete assistance commence quickly and be provided long term.
- **Undertake diplomatic efforts to restart Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations for peace.** The Israeli-Egyptian and Israeli-Jordanian peace agreements offer precedents, the Arab League Peace Initiative offers support, and the principles and ideas from earlier Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian negotiations offer outlines for possible peace agreements between Israel and Syria, and Israel and Lebanon that would help complete the process of comprehensive Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace.

**We call on the United States to encourage Palestinian leaders to:**

- **Work actively to resolve the current crisis in Gaza and achieve an effective Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire.** Resolving the crisis will involve securing an effective ceasefire, stopping attacks against Israel, punishing perpetrators of violence, releasing the Israeli soldiers and cooperating with Israeli security forces to improve security for Israelis and Palestinians.
- **Work to achieve a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire with Israel, eliminate violent attacks against Israel and punish perpetrators.** The Palestinian Authority needs to consolidate security forces, commit itself to take effective measures to prevent attacks on Israelis by extremist groups and punish those who carry out any such violence.
- **Make clear that the Palestinian Authority is committed to negotiating a two-state solution with Israel.** The government must clearly reject violence, recognize Israel, accept previous agreements and be committed to entering into negotiations that lead to the creation of a viable, independent, democratic state in the West Bank and Gaza living side by side with Israel with security, dignity, and religious liberty for both peoples.
- **Continue to develop democratic institutions and strengthen the rule of law, ensuring transparency and effective monitoring of aid to the Palestinian people.** These initiatives are essential both to create a more stable and effective Palestinian Authority and to engender international confidence and secure international aid and investment.
- **Work with Israelis and the international community to guarantee access to the Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.**

**We call on the United States to encourage Israel to:**

- **Work actively to resolve the crisis in Gaza and achieve an effective Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire.** Resolving the crisis will involve securing an effective ceasefire, stopping military attacks on Palestinians, enabling the movement of goods and people, releasing Palestinian officials and other prisoners, and cooperating with Palestinian security forces to improve security for Israelis and Palestinians.
- **Seek effective ways to restart negotiations for peace with the Palestinians.** Prime Minister Olmert should resume talks with Palestinian President Abbas as soon as possible. Bilateral negotiations are essential. The outlines for a just two-state peace agreement with the Palestinians are well known. The only realistic way to end the conflict is by means of negotiations and compromise. The twin essentials for building peace are real security for Israelis and a viable, secure state for Palestinians.
- **Take concrete steps to support the prospect of a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.** Israel should remove “illegal outposts,” halt expansion of settlements, refrain from constructing the “security barrier” in areas that infringe on Palestinian land and reiterate its previous commitment that the route of the wall does not prejudice final status negotiations. Israel should also take steps to ease the humanitarian situation of Palestinians and promote economic development, including appropriately monitored transfers of Palestinian taxes collected by Israel to meet the needs of the Palestinian people, and freer movement for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

**Support full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 in Lebanon.** This cooperation includes withdrawal of its military forces to the international border, resolution of the prisoner issue, and cooperation with the U.N. Secretary General to resolve the Shebaa farms issue.

**Initiate diplomatic efforts to restart negotiations for peace with Syria and Lebanon.** The broad outlines for peace agreements with Syria and Lebanon are clear, based on the prior experience with Jordan and Egypt. The only realistic way to ensure the security of Israel and to stabilize the region is by means of comprehensive negotiations.

**Work with Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to the Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.**

**We call on the United States to encourage Arab states to:**

**Support formation of a Palestinian Authority government fully committed to achieving an effective ceasefire with Israel and to negotiating a two-state solution.** Consistent with the Arab League Peace Initiative, press Hamas to reject violence and accept U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397 as the basis for a negotiated two-state solution with Israel. Provide aid and development assistance to improve the capacity of the Palestinians to build a viable state.

**Support full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 in relation to Lebanon.** This includes support for the Lebanese government, with help from the U.N. peacekeeping force, asserting sole authority throughout southern Lebanon, cooperating in preventing the rearming of Hezbollah, releasing Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah, and providing assistance for massive reconstruction efforts in Lebanon.

**Undertake diplomatic initiatives to restart and advance Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations for peace.** Comprehensive Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace as envisioned in the Arab League Peace Initiative requires successful negotiations for peace agreements between Israel and Syria, and Israel and Lebanon.

**Work toward a comprehensive peace that recognizes Israel and ensures security and peace for all the nations of the region.** The comprehensive peace envisioned in the Arab League Peace Initiative should lead to recognition of Israel by all Arab states.

**Work with Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to guarantee access to the Holy Places and religious liberty for all peoples.**

### **A Common Commitment to Action**

As religious leaders we commit ourselves to working with the Administration and the Congress to support active, fair and firm U.S. leadership to help Israelis, Palestinians and Arab states achieve a just peace. We will pray for God's blessing to sustain all those who seek to build a just peace and will work within and across our respective faith communities to build bridges of understanding and a shared commitment to a just peace for all of the peoples of the Middle East. We commit ourselves to building public support for peace with justice for all in the region. With the blessing of God, we are confident that this urgent moment of crisis can give way to genuine hope for all God's children in the Middle East.

### **Signers of "Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope"**

#### **Christian Leaders:**

His Eminence, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archdiocese of Washington

His Eminence, Cardinal William Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore

Most Reverend William Skylstad, President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios, Primate, Greek Orthodox Church in America

His Eminence, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, Armenian Apostolic Church in America

Bishop Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop, Episcopal Church

John H. Thomas, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ

The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister, President, Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)

The Reverend Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Ann B. Sherer, Bishop, The United Methodist Church

The Reverend Michael E. Livingston, President, National Council of Churches USA

The Reverend John M. Buchanan, Editor and Publisher, Christian Century  
Richard J. Mouw, President, Fuller Theological Seminary  
The Reverend Leighton Ford, President, Leighton Ford Ministries  
David Neff, Editor and Vice-President, Christianity Today

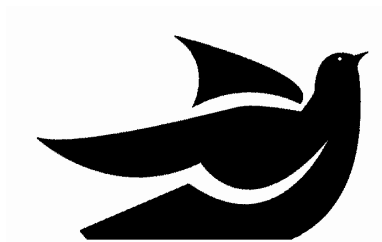
**Jewish Leaders:**

Rabbi Harry K. Danziger, President, Central Conference of American Rabbis  
Rabbi Paul Menitoff, Executive Vice President Emeritus, Central Conference of American Rabbis  
Rabbi Eric Yoffie, President, Union for Reform Judaism  
Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism  
Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
Rabbi Elliot Dorff, Rector, University of Judaism  
Dr. Carl Sheingold, Executive Vice President, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation  
Rabbi Brant Rosen, President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
Rabbi Amy Small, Past President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
Rabbi Peter Knobel, Member, Council for a Parliament of World Religions  
Rabbi Alvin M. Sugarman, Vice President, A Different Future  
Rabbi Merle S. Singer, Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Beth El, Boca Raton, Florida

**Muslim Leaders:**

Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, National Director, Islamic Society of North America  
Imam Mohammed ibn Hagmagid, Vice President, Islamic Society of North America  
Naim Baig, Secretary General, Islamic Circle of North America  
Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Founder, American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA)  
Imam Yahya Hendi, Chaplain, Georgetown University  
Dawud Assad, President Emeritus, Council of Mosques, USA  
Iftekhhar A. Hai, Founding Director, United Muslims of America

Organizations for Identification Only



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



**National Interreligious Leadership Initiative  
for Peace in the Middle East  
Letter to President Obama**

January 27, 2009

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Mr. President:

We write as Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI) to offer our prayerful support on the occasion of your inauguration as 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

We are united in support of your commitment to provide active, fair and firm U.S. leadership for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace from the start of your presidency. We appreciate your telephone calls to Arab and Israeli leaders on your first day in office and your appointment of George Mitchell as the Middle East envoy, especially since NILI has repeatedly called for a special envoy.

Urgent U.S. diplomacy, in cooperation with Egypt and other parties, is needed immediately to help assure that the cessation of violence by Hamas and Israel is maintained and developed into a truly effective and sustainable ceasefire. People in our communities have different precious bonds with Israelis and Palestinians and responded in different ways to the recent war between Hamas and Israel. Nonetheless, we are united in support of the following elements as necessary to a sustainable ceasefire, including: Hamas' agreeing to stop all rocket attacks on Israel; international measures to prevent smuggling-resupply of rockets through the Sinai; Israel's agreeing to halt all military operations in Gaza, withdraw its forces, and open Gaza border crossings; and all parties' committing to the provision of substantial humanitarian and economic assistance to the people of Gaza.

We reiterate what we said in our November 2008 statement, "A Window of Hope for the Peace of Jerusalem," that despite discouraging developments and tragic violence there are signs of hope. Majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians still support a two-state solution. Arab states have declared their commitment to peace with Israel in the historic Arab Peace Initiative. Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian negotiations have made progress. Official and informal negotiations have produced principles and practical ideas for resolving the conflict, including the difficult issues of refugees and Jerusalem.

From the founding of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative in 2003, we have been united in urging U.S. leadership to encourage and support steps by both sides to restore hope for peace and renew momentum in peace negotiations. Building on a ceasefire agreement, the United States should insist that Israel fulfill its commitment to dismantle illegal outposts in the West Bank and halt all expansion of settlements. On the Palestinian side, the United States should support efforts to form a Palestinian government capable of representing the West Bank and Gaza

and committed to rejecting violence and negotiating a two-state solution with Israel. Building on the Arab Peace Initiative, the United States should engage actively in promoting direct negotiations for peace between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon.

As Jews, Christians and Muslims, we share a common religious commitment to peace with justice for all of God's children. We refuse, now and always, to give into cynicism or despair. We are people of hope. We pledge to call upon members in churches, synagogues and mosques across the country to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and to support you and your Administration in providing engaged U.S. leadership for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace. The time for peace is now.

We look forward to an early and timely occasion to meet with you as well as with Secretary of State Clinton and to continuing a practice of having regular high level meetings at the State Department to learn what the Administration is doing and to offer our ideas and support.

We pledge our prayers and active encouragement for your leadership for peace in the Middle East. Our nation and the world will be much safer with the achievement of peace in Jerusalem.

Respectfully,

**Christian Leaders:**

His Eminence Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington \*

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace, USCCB\*

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Primate, Greek Orthodox Church in America\*

His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, Armenian Apostolic Church in America\*

Archbishop Vicken Aykasian, President, National Council of Churches of Christ USA\*

The Reverend Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, National Council of Churches of Christ USA\*

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

Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate, Episcopal Church\*

The Reverend John H. Thomas, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ\*

The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister, President, Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)\*

The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)\*

Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader, Ecumenical Officer, Council of Bishops, United Methodist Church\*

The Reverend Michael E. Livingston, Executive Director, International Council of Community Churches\*

The Reverend Leighton Ford, President, Leighton Ford Ministries, Board Member, World Vision US\*

Richard J. Mouw, President, Fuller Theological Seminary\*

John Buchanan, Editor/Publisher, The Christian Century, Pastor, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago\*

David Neff, Editor and Vice-President, Christianity Today\*

**Jewish Leaders:**

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism\*

Rabbi Peter Knobel, President, Central Conference of American Rabbis\*

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, Executive Vice President Emeritus, Central Conference of American Rabbis\*

Dr. Carl Sheingold, Executive Vice President, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation\*

Rabbi Toba Spitzer, President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly\*

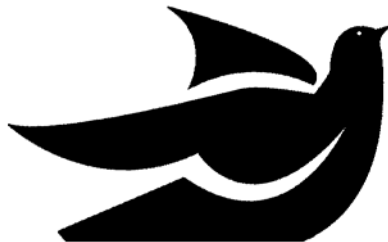
Rabbi Brant Rosen, Immediate Past President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly\*  
Rabbi Amy Small, Past President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly\*  
Rabbi Alvin M. Sugarman, Vice President, A Different Future\*  
Rabbi Merle S. Singer, Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Beth El, Boca Raton, Florida\*

**Muslim Leaders:**

Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, National Director, Islamic Society of North America\*  
Imam Mohammed ibn Hagmagid, Vice President, Islamic Society of North America\*  
Naeem Baig, Secretary General, Islamic Circle of North America\*  
Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim Chaplain, Georgetown University\*  
Dawud Assad, President Emeritus, Council of Mosques, USA\*  
Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Founder, American Society for Muslim Advancement/Cordoba Initiative\*  
Eide Alawan, Interfaith Office for Outreach, Islamic Center of America\*  
Iftekhhar A. Hai, Founding Director, United Muslims of America\*

\*Organizations for Identification Only

Cc: U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



**National Interreligious Leadership  
Initiative for Peace in the Middle East  
A Window of Hope for the Peace of Jerusalem:  
Jewish, Christian and Muslim Religious Leaders Call for Urgent U.S. Leadership**

Our faith traditions teach that every person is created by the one God and deserving of respect. This common religious heritage – which we trace to Abraham – finds expression in a common commitment to peace with justice for all God’s children.

For the past five years we have worked together for a two-state solution that will bring both Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace, based on U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397, and the peace of Jerusalem. As religious leaders in the United States, we have prayed for peace, made public statements, met with public officials, and stood in solidarity with the religious leaders in Israel, the Palestinian Territories and throughout the region.

Despite tragic violence and discouraging developments, there are signs of hope. Majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians still support a two-state solution. Arab states have declared their commitment to peace in the Arab Peace Initiative. The United States convened the international community at Annapolis to support a renewed peace process. Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian negotiations have made progress. Official and informal negotiations have produced the outlines of concrete compromises for resolving the conflict, including the difficult issues of refugees and Jerusalem. Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders both here and in the region reject the killing of innocents, support a just peace, and believe sustained negotiations are the only path to peace. We are encouraged by the work of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.

We cannot deny that there have been serious setbacks. Palestinian rocket attacks, combined with threats from Iran, revive fears for the survival of Israel. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Israeli checkpoints, outposts and continued expansion of settlements cause Palestinians to question whether a two-state solution remains possible. The strength of extremists in all three religious traditions, the split between Gaza and the West Bank, the political weakness of Palestinian and Israeli leadership, and the transition to a new Administration in the United States compound the challenges of peacemaking. There is a real danger that cynicism will replace hope and that people will give up on peace.

This dangerous time demands clarity. So let us be clear. As religious leaders, we remain firmly committed to a two-state solution to the conflict as the only viable way forward. We believe that concerted, sustained U.S. leadership for peace is essential. And we know that time is not on the side of peace, that delay is not an option.

The path to peace shuns violence and embraces dialogue. This path demands reciprocal steps that build confidence. This path can lead to a future of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace with security and dignity for both peoples and stability in the region.

As we have said in previous statements, the United States has a unique and indispensable role which gives our nation a special responsibility to pursue peace. Israeli-Palestinian peace must be an urgent priority for President-elect Obama from the day he takes office. Achieving Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace will have positive reverberations in the region and around the

world. Our nation and the world will be much safer with the achievement of the peace of Jerusalem.

We refuse, now and always, to give into cynicism or despair. We are people of hope. We call upon the members of our religious communities to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and to urge our political leaders to advance a two-state solution with vigor both now and in the early months of the new Administration. The time for peace is now.

November 2008

## **Endorsers of Consensus Statement**

### **Christian Leaders:**

His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, President, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops\*

His Eminence Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington \*

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Primate, Greek Orthodox Church in America\*

His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, Armenian Apostolic Church in America\*

Archbishop Vicken Aykasian, President, National Council of Churches of Christ USA\*

The Reverend Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, National Council of Churches of Christ USA\*

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

Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop Episcopal Church\*

The Reverend John H. Thomas, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ\*

The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister, President, Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)\*

The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)\*

Ann B. Sherer, Bishop, The United Methodist Church\*

The Reverend Michael E. Livingston, Executive Director, International Council of Community Churches\*

The Reverend Leighton Ford, President, Leighton Ford Ministries, Board Member, World Vision US\*

John Buchanan, Editor/Publisher, The Christian Century, Pastor, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago

David Neff, Editor and Vice-President, Christianity Today\*

### **Jewish Leaders:**

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism\*

Rabbi Peter Knobel, President, Central Conference of American Rabbis\*

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, Executive Vice President Emeritus, Central Conference of American Rabbis\*

Rabbi Elliot Dorff, Rector, American Jewish University\*

Dr. Carl Sheingold, Executive Vice President, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation\*

Rabbi Toba Spitzer, President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly\*

Rabbi Brant Rosen, Immediate Past President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly\*

Rabbi Amy Small, Past President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly\*

Rabbi Alvin M. Sugarman, Vice President, A Different Future\*

Rabbi Merle S. Singer, Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Beth El, Boca Raton, Florida\*

**Muslim Leaders:**

Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, National Director, Islamic Society of North America\*

Imam Mohammed ibn Hagmagid, Vice President, Islamic Society of North America\*

Naeem Baig, Secretary General, Islamic Circle of North America\*

Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim Chaplain, Georgetown University\*

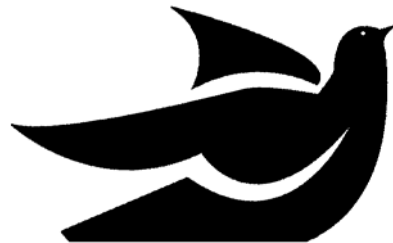
Dawud Assad, President Emeritus, Council of Mosques, USA\*

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Founder, American Society for Muslim Advancement/Cordoba Initiative\*

Iftekhhar A. Hai, Founding Director, United Muslims of America\*

\*Organizations for Identification Only

November 2008



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## **Twelve Urgent Steps for Peace**

*Christian, Jewish and Muslim Leaders  
Unite To Urge U.S. Leadership  
in Pursuit of Arab-Israeli Palestinian Peace*

*Adopted December 2003*

We are Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders committed to working together for peace between Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab states. We are encouraged by evidence that majorities of Israelis and Palestinians accept that what they need most - real security for Israelis and the end of occupation for Palestinians - cannot be achieved by violence, but only by negotiations. We are encouraged by the civil society initiatives for peace, including the peace agreement signed in Geneva. We believe peace among Israel, the Palestinians and Arab states is possible and that determined U.S. leadership is absolutely essential for pursuing the Road Map, for progress in the global campaign against terrorism and for the future of world peace.

The National Interreligious Leadership Delegation is seeking meetings with President Bush and other senior Administration officials to advocate the following urgent steps for peace. At the same time, the delegation will also advocate in a non-partisan way with all members of Congress and with other elected officials. The delegation is committed in the coming months to utilizing the full communication capacities of our organizations to generate a broad active nationwide constituency to make peace in the Middle East a top priority of U.S. policy.

We believe U.S. determination to pursue full implementation of the Road Map, including insistence on the following specific steps, would be supported by large majorities in all our communities, by majorities of Israelis and Palestinians; and would win moral and political support worldwide.

### **Urgent Steps Needed on the Road to Peace**

The United States, in coordination with the Quartet, should immediately take the following steps to renew momentum on the Road Map:

1. Strongly reiterate the Road Map's unequivocal call for an end to all acts of violence and work actively with the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli Government and Arab states to achieve and maintain a ceasefire agreement.

Comment: Ending violent attacks and counter attacks is essential to making progress on the Road Map. During the several week period following the Aqaba Summit when there were no violent attacks the Road Map began to develop traction and people on both sides began to believe that the Road Map could work. The United States, in coordination with the Quartet, should work actively with the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli Government and the Arab states to avoid any further escalation of violence and to achieve a ceasefire agreement, including an effective system for monitoring and publicizing violations by either side.

2. Exercise active, determined U.S. and Quartet engagement, including consistent, visible presence of the special Presidential Envoy and larger scale, public monitoring of implementation required by both sides.

Comment: Given the legacy of three years of violent confrontation, the level of mistrust between the parties, and the pressures on Israeli and Palestinian leaders, there is need for active high level, public engagement by the United States and the Quartet, including consistent, visible presence of the special Presidential Envoy, in pressing for implementation of steps required by both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government. The monitoring system for measuring implementation needs to be larger, more vigorous and visible.

3. Determine with more specificity steps which each side must take and set a timetable for taking them. (See below for Specific Steps to be taken by the Palestinian Authority and Israel.)

Comment: The Road Map is clear in calling for parallel and simultaneous steps by each side to begin to address the core concerns of the other side. The United States, in coordination with the Quartet, should spell out specific steps each side must take, along with an explicit timetable for taking them. Monitors should report publicly on the performance of each party in relation to these expectations.

4. Support benchmarks for possible mutually acceptable solutions based on the principles and ideas generated in earlier negotiations and in current Israeli-Palestinian civil society projects, such as the Nusseibeh-Ayalon initiative and the Geneva Accord.

Comment: Reflecting the vision articulated by President Bush on June 24, 2002, the Road Map's goal is the emergence (by the year 2005) of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace with the Jewish state of Israel. The Road Map views progress toward this goal as "a vital element of international efforts to promote a comprehensive peace on all tracks, including the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks." The goal of comprehensive Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace requires that the United States and the Quartet work to restart negotiations on all tracks. The principles and ideas discussed in formal and informal negotiations (Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Taba, Egypt in 2000-01 and currently in the civil society projects such as the Nusseibeh-Ayalon initiative and the Geneva Accord; and Israeli-Syrian negotiations at Wye, Maryland in 1995) provide important hopeful benchmarks for possible mutually acceptable solutions. Focusing public attention on these ideas can help allay fears on both sides and build support in the Middle East and here for realistic compromises on crucial, sensitive issues, including security, refugees and the future of Jerusalem.

### **Specific Steps for the Palestinian Authority**

The United States, in coordination with the Quartet, should insist that the Palestinian Authority:

1. Continue and deepen the process of democratic reforms and financial accountability.

Comment: It is essential for progress in negotiations and for the future of a Palestinian state that the process of democratic reform and financial accountability continue, including support for a Prime Minister and Cabinet level ministers with real authority, the development of a constitution, free press, free and fair elections, consolidation of security forces, and progress on other judicial, administrative and economic benchmarks, as established by the International Task Force on Palestinian Reform. The

U.S. and Quartet should adopt a realistic, balanced approach of pressing for continuing the democratic reform process, while not appearing to dictate the choice of leadership for the Palestinian people.

2. Take effective action to halt violent attacks against Israelis, punish those who commit any such acts, and gain commitments from all factions to cooperate in implementing the Road Map.

Comment: The Palestinian suicide bombings and other acts of terrorism not only are morally indefensible and generate tremendous fear, frustration and anger among Israelis, but also have very seriously hurt the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people. The new Palestinian Prime Minister, the Interior Minister and the Palestinian Authority as a whole must find ways to prevent these attacks and to gain agreement from all Palestinian factions on supporting, or at least not interfering with, the steps required by Palestinians in implementing the Road Map.

3. Cooperate with regional and international efforts to cut off aid to and dismantle those groups which persist in planning or carrying out acts of violence against Israelis.

Comment: The Palestinian Authority should consider individuals or groups which persist in planning or carrying-out violent attacks against Israelis to be illegal and against the fundamental interests of the Palestinian people. In such cases, the Palestinian Authority should cooperate with international efforts to cut-off any funds to such individuals or organizations, and effectively dismantle those organizations.

4. U.S., regional, and international support and (effectively monitored) economic aid should be increased to bolster the Palestinian central authority's capacity to consolidate and strengthen its security forces, prevent terrorist attacks; and to deliver humanitarian aid, vital services, and development assistance to the Palestinian people.

Comment: Three years of violent attacks, counter-attacks and military reoccupation have taken a terrible toll on the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to provide security or vital social services. Increased U.S. and international (effectively monitored) economic aid is essential to rebuilding and enabling the Palestinian Authority to carry out its responsibilities in implementation of the Road Map, including consolidating security forces, preventing terrorist attacks and becoming the reliable, primary source of services and aid to the Palestinian people.

### **Specific Steps for the Israeli Government**

Simultaneously, the United States, in coordination with the Quartet, should insist that the Israeli Government:

1. Take effective action to dismantle all unauthorized settlement outposts established since March 2002 and freeze expansion of existing settlements.

Comment: The Israeli government's continued support for expansion of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza is a major threat to the viability of a future Palestinian state, directly undermines Palestinian confidence in the peace process, compounds Israeli security problems, and represents an additional economic burden on a seriously hurting Israeli economy.

2. Exercise measures, such as lifting curfews and easing restrictions on movement within the West Bank and Gaza, to improve the humanitarian situation of Palestinians.

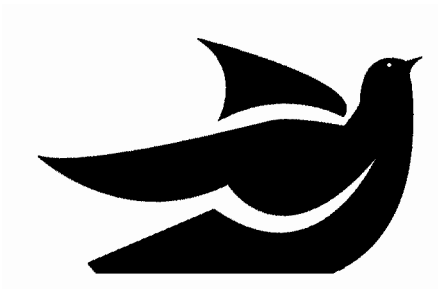
Comment: Reports have documented the terrible humanitarian crisis Palestinians face as a result of the three years of violent confrontation and reoccupation of Palestinian areas. There are measures which the Israeli Government can and should take, such as lifting curfews and easing restrictions on the movement of people and goods within the West Bank and Gaza, which would improve the humanitarian situation.

**3. Halt construction of the Security "Fence" or "Wall" beyond the Green Line around settlements in areas which require confiscation of more Palestinian land and threaten the viability of a future Palestinian state.**

Comment: It is understandable, even if it is no solution, that Israeli frustration over continued violent attacks by Palestinians led to support for building a Security "Fence" or "Wall" to separate Israel from the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. However, the actual and proposed route of the Wall is complicated by Israel's commitment to defend Jewish settlements. The Wall has been and is being constructed in some areas which require confiscation of more Palestinian land, effectively engage the local Palestinian population, and threaten the viability of a future Palestinian state.

**4. In coordination with the Palestinian Authority demonstrating capacity to prevent violent attacks, withdraw Israeli military forces from areas reoccupied since September 2000.**

Comment: As the Palestinian Authority demonstrates increased capacity to prevent violent attacks against Israelis, Israel should withdraw its military forces from areas reoccupied since September 2000. Achieving real security for Israelis and ending the occupation for Palestinians are the twin essentials for building peace. The United States needs to engage directly with the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority at a high level to develop specific steps and a timetable for this process.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## Sample Press Release

### **(City)'s Jewish, Christian and Muslim Leaders Join Together to Urge the Administration and Congress to Make Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace a Top Priority**

#### **Local Religious Leaders Join Unprecedented Nationwide Interreligious Initiative for Peace**

#### **Initiative for Peace Aims to Accomplish the Vision of a Negotiated Two-State Solution and Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace**

(DATE) Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders today publicly joined an urgent appeal to the United States government to make Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations a top priority of U.S. policy. This unique, local interreligious effort is part of an unprecedented nationwide initiative led by more than 35 eminent Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders of national organizations. Together they are working to advocate the moral and political imperative for active, determined U.S. leadership for peace in the Middle East.

The religious leaders believe that U.S. leadership is essential to renewing progress toward the goal of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel with peace and security for both peoples. Since its inception the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East has issued numerous appeals to the President and the Secretary of State urging strong U.S. leadership. Local religious leaders in U.S. cities throughout the country have endorsed these appeals to the Administration. In December 2006 the national leaders released a consensus statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope.”

Local endorsers of this initiative, including (LIST LOCAL ENDORSERS), are communicating and encouraging their congregations to communicate with Senators \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and with their Representatives to urge active bi-partisan support for the message of this interreligious effort.

The initiative’s newest statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope,” states that America has an inescapable responsibility and an indispensable role to provide creative, determined leadership for building a just peace for all in the Middle East. Achieving Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace will have positive reverberations in the region and around the world.

The leaders also state that military action will not resolve the conflict. The only authentic way forward is a negotiated settlement built on difficult, but realistic, compromises and security arrangements with international guarantees. The path to peace requires a rejection of violence and an embrace of dialogue. Such a path could lead to a future of two states, Israel and Palestine,

living side by side in peace with security and dignity for both peoples and to a future of stability in the region with Israel living in peace and security with its Arab neighbors.

The Appeal also offers specific suggestions for U.S. involvement, including:

- Exercise persistent, determined leadership at the highest levels to secure a comprehensive and just resolution of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 1397.
- Work, in coordination with the Quartet (U.S., European Union, Russia, United Nations), to create conditions that bring about serious negotiations for a two-state solution following the lines of the Roadmap and earlier civil society initiatives;
- Support full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 in relation to Lebanon; and
- Undertake diplomatic efforts to restart Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations for peace.

The religious leaders believe the Geneva Accord and other model peace agreements negotiated by prominent Israelis and Palestinians are very important because they help to demonstrate that peace is possible. They offer realistic, compromise solutions to even the toughest issues, including borders, refugees and Jerusalem.

Launched in December 2003, the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative unites some of the most prominent American religious leaders in support of active, determined U.S. leadership in pursuit of peace. The delegation members believe that both the deepest values of their religious traditions and the urgency of the situation necessitate strong, united interreligious action immediately to mobilize their communities across the country to support U.S. leadership for peace.

The religious leaders believe that "the land that was the birthplace of all three Abrahamic religions can once again become a source of hope, justice and reconciliation for the whole world. Jerusalem can be the city of peace and U.S. leadership is urgently needed to help make it happen."

Attachments:

Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope (Document 4)  
List of National Leaders (Document 3)



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## **Guidelines for Supporting the National Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East**

The following guidelines are offered for speaking (or writing) in support of the statements of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative with members of Congress and/or representatives of the media.

**STAY ON MESSAGE.** Keep focused on the unprecedented interreligious composition and timeliness of this initiative and on the main points of the statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope.”

Don't address issues which we have not discussed or agreed on. It's perfectly appropriate to say, "We have not discussed that and therefore I have no comment on it."

Emphasize that your local effort is part of a multi-city initiative in cooperation with heads of twenty-eight national Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious organizations.

The cities so far where religious leaders have endorsed the Interreligious Initiative's statements and taken some action together modeled on the National Initiative include: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte and Durham, North Carolina, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Hartford-New Haven, Houston, Indianapolis, Central Long Island, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Philadelphia, Portland, Oregon, San Antonio, San Francisco, Seattle, Toledo, Washington, DC, and Wilmington, DE.

### **The Main Points of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative:**

**1) To make Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace an urgent, top priority of U.S. policy.** The United States has an inescapable responsibility and an indispensable role to provide creative, determined leadership for building a just peace for all in the Middle East by advancing the goal of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, with security and peace for both peoples.

**2) Explore bold initiatives for peace such as appointing a special envoy, hosting an international conference, and/or forming mutually acceptable security arrangements for a negotiated two-state solution.** U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397 (supporting a two-state solution) provide the internationally agreed framework for comprehensive and lasting Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559 provide a framework for resolving the situation in Lebanon.

**While we are not experts in diplomacy, the Initiative has made several specific suggestions for the U.S. role:**

**a. Negotiate a timetable for specific, simultaneous steps to be taken by the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government, with effective and highly visible monitoring to assure implementation by both sides.**

*A timetable for simultaneous steps by both sides and an effective monitoring system are essential. The idea of insisting that all violence stop before starting negotiations gives veto power to extremists. The idea that one side must take several steps before the other side takes any doesn't work. Steps have to be reciprocal and simultaneous. Effective monitoring is essential to assure implementation and to keep up momentum in the process.*

**b. Take the lead to mobilize increased international economic aid (with effective controls by a credible institution such as the World Bank) to build up the Palestinian Authority's capacity to provide security, prevent violent attacks on Israelis, and deliver humanitarian aid, vital services, and development assistance to the Palestinian people.**

*The process of increasing aid has begun but much more is needed. Substantial (carefully monitored) aid is needed to provide humanitarian relief, rebuild security forces under the central control of the Palestinian Authority, repair damaged infrastructure, and create desperately needed jobs.*

**c. Build upon principles, benchmarks and practical ideas for peace that emerged from earlier initiatives.**

*Helpful concepts can still be found in the Geneva Accord and People's Voice model peace agreements, as well as in the "Road Map." These benchmarks suggest realistic compromises for final status issues, including: borders and security arrangements, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem. Building public support for these ideas can help convince people that peace is possible and help our religious communities, the media, and political leaders focus on realistic solutions for peace.*

### **Conflict and Tensions Between Our Communities:**

In response to reporters questions about tensions between our communities in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we urge that your responses reflect the foundational "Principles of Cooperation" adopted by national leaders of the Interreligious Initiative. Note especially the second principle:

"Recognizing and appreciating the deep, precious bonds many of us have with different sides of this conflict and how these bonds sometimes cause us to have different and conflicting viewpoints, we believe our areas of agreement are more important than our disagreements, and we commit ourselves to work together conscientiously and sensitively to emphasize our common agenda for peace."

While various religious leaders in any of our three communities may at some time have made contentious, partisan statements related to the conflict, including justifying or seeming to justify killing of innocents, this does not rule out or invalidate our working together now based on agreed upon Principles of Cooperation and our united support our statements. After all, many Israelis and Palestinians who now are working together for peace in the past may well have participated in fighting against each other.

Indeed, this interreligious initiative takes inspiration from the more than 500 Israeli and Palestinian families of the Parents Circle (formerly the Bereaved Parents) who have lost family members in the conflict and now are committed to working together for peace and reconciliation.

These Israeli and Palestinian parents of kids who were killed set a high moral standard for all of us.

**Specific Issues in the Conflict:**

If reporters ask questions about specific issues, e.g Palestinian tensions and reform, suicide bombings, the security “fence,” or “wall,” settlements, etc., we advise that you decline to discuss specific issues, focusing back on the main message and points of the statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope.”

If you decide you need to respond, we ask that you be guided closely by the Principles of Cooperation and the language in the “Twelve Steps for Peace” adopted unanimously by the national leaders of the Initiative at its inception.

Remember you are not simply responding for yourself or your organization, but for a new and still fragile interreligious Jewish/Christian/Muslim initiative. Think how a particular question or issue may be viewed by your colleagues for peace in the other two communities.

**Emphasize Actions You Are Taking or Plan to Take:**

- Communicating your support of the Initiative’s statements to your Senators and Representative.
- Joining with other endorsers to seek appointments with your Senators.
- Announcing the Initiative and distributing materials from the National Initiative to congregations.
- Urging members of congregations who support the Initiative to write to their Senators and Representative.
- Planning a public interreligious community event for peace.

Prepared by:  
National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East Consultant  
16020 94th Avenue NW, Stanwood, WA 98292  
Office Tel/Fax: (360) 652-4285  
E-Mail: [usicpme@aol.com](mailto:usicpme@aol.com)



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## **Sample Op-ED**

### **Moving from Crisis to Hope in the Middle East**

*(Op-Ed Article in Tidings, Southern California's Catholic Weekly, January 5, 2007)*

Creating a lasting peace in the Middle East can often seem hopeless given the fractious history of the region. As Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders, we believe peace is an essential of faith. This shared commitment compels us to recognize that the light of a new future can break through the darkness of past tragedies and political failures. We believe our nation has an inescapable responsibility and an indispensable role to help make this happen.

We are increasingly frustrated that our own government has failed to show the necessary leadership to bring an end to this long standing conflict. That is why our national inter-religious initiative released a statement last week signed by 34 leaders of Jewish, Christian and Muslim organizations calling on President Bush and Congress to make peace in the Middle East a top priority.

We are not naïve about the challenges ahead. As leaders who have spent extensive time focused on the Middle East with concerns for both Arabs and Israelis, we know there are no easy answers. Our deep ties to the region help us to appreciate the different narratives of the people who live together on this ancient and contested soil. Each community has authentic stories of suffering and legitimate aspirations. The fundamental choice we face is whether to allow political, cultural and religious differences to tear us apart or to stand together in solidarity.

A time of crisis can awaken opportunities for change. The tenuous ceasefire between Israelis and Palestinians, and the Baker-Hamilton report conclusion that Arab-Israeli peace is essential to stability in the region, offer a new opportunity for urgently needed U.S. leadership. The only way forward is a negotiated settlement built on realistic compromises, a rejection of violence, and genuine dialogue.

Specifically, President Bush and the new Congress should do more to create conditions that lead to serious negotiations for a two-state solution following the lines of the “roadmap” developed by the United States in cooperation with the European Union, Russia and the United Nations, and build on the ideas in unofficial model peace agreements such as the Geneva Accord. This requires, among other steps, urging Israel to support a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza; calling on Hamas to reject violence and recognize Israel; providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians and urging Israeli and Palestinian leaders to restart negotiations.

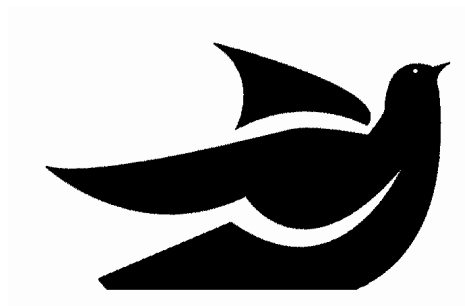
Our government must continue to urge Palestinian leaders to end attacks against Israel, punish perpetrators of violence, and make clear that the Palestinian Authority is fully united in its commitment to negotiating a two-state solution with Israel. At the same time, President Bush should call on Israel to resolve the crisis in Gaza. This means strengthening the current ceasefire, stopping military attacks on Palestinians, releasing Palestinian officials and other prisoners and improving security for all Israelis and Palestinians. The United States should also pursue

diplomatic efforts to restart negotiations between Israel, Syria and Lebanon. The way forward will be difficult and require hard choices. The alternative is more bloodshed and death.

Jews, Christians and Muslims trace their spiritual heritages back to the patriarch Abraham. We believe that all human beings are created in God's image. Violence in the name of God defiles all religions and the dignity of each human person. We ask our nation's leaders to show the moral and political will needed to move from crisis to hope in the Middle East so that all of God's children may soon taste the fruits of peace.

\* \* \* \*

By David Saperstein, Director, Central Conference of American Rabbis;  
Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, National Director, Islamic Society of North America;  
and Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington  
(Organizations for Identification only.)



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



**Sample Op-Ed**  
**A United Appeal for Peace in the Middle East**  
*(Op-Ed Article in Seattle Times, January 11, 2005)*

Can the moral, moderate voices among American Jews, Christians and Muslims unite to persuade our government to engage actively in pursuing peace between Israelis and Palestinians? We believe they can. We believe it is time to take center stage away from the extremists and cynics, who warp our vision about the opportunity for co-existence and who obscure the reality that majorities of Israelis and Palestinians want an end to violence and would accept a negotiated two-state peace agreement.

Although much has been written recently about the pivotal role of religion in politics, it is still very unusual for American Jews, Christians and Muslims to work together for peace in the Middle East. Despite different backgrounds and different ways we are connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we are united in our belief that peace in the Middle East is possible, and that our government must play the critical role in facilitating negotiations and strengthening the moderates on both sides, in order for the peace process to succeed.

We are three persons of faith: a Muslim, originally from the Palestinian city of Hebron in the Holy Land, with Palestinian relatives and friends who have had innocent family members killed in attacks by Israelis and believe Israelis want them to disappear; a Lutheran Bishop who, though long a supporter of Israel, regularly hears pleas for help from his Palestinian Lutheran colleague living under occupation in the West Bank; and a Rabbi, committed to the survival of Israel who knows Jews who have lost family members in Palestinian suicide bombings and still fear that Palestinians want Israel to disappear. Yet, we are committed to working together for peace.

We are joining Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders in Seattle and over a dozen cities across the nation who are making a public commitment to educate our congregations and speak to our elected officials on the necessity of direct U.S. engagement in the peace process. We are supporting the national leaders of our religious communities who have issued a united Appeal to President Bush to make Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace an urgent, top priority of his second term.

As persons who have precious bonds with people on different sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we have put aside our differences to demonstrate how both our religious teachings and the practical requirements for peace lead us to fundamental agreement. We join Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders in the Middle East who absolutely condemn the killing of innocents and call for an end to all acts of violence. And we agree that what each side needs most - real, lasting security for Israelis and a viable independent and secure state for Palestinians - cannot be achieved by violence but only by negotiations.

We are inspired by the examples of Israelis and Palestinians who, despite the violence and deep mistrust, are working together for peace, including 500 families from both sides who have had family members killed in the conflict. And we know that there are principles and ideas from earlier official negotiations and from several, unofficial model peace agreements which point the way toward possible compromise solutions to even the toughest issues, including borders,

refugees, and Jerusalem.

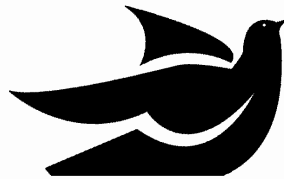
We are increasingly convinced that completing the peace process, rather than invading Iraq, should have been the priority for U.S. policy in the Middle East. But even now, no matter what happens in Iraq, we believe renewed U.S. leadership for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace is essential and that resolving this conflict will significantly reduce support for extremism worldwide, and enhance prospects for democratic reform and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the region.

Specifically, we believe President Bush should appoint a special Presidential Envoy with a fulltime commitment to pursue negotiations. Former Secretary of State James Baker, and former Senators John Danforth and George Mitchell have been mentioned publicly as possibilities and seem to us to be good candidates. A timetable should be negotiated for specific simultaneous steps by the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority; and an effective, public monitoring system put in place to assure implementation by both sides. There needs to be a substantial increase in (strictly monitored) aid to the Palestinian Authority to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, rebuild infrastructure and provide desperately needed jobs.

Now, with Palestinian elections for new national leadership and Israel's plan for withdrawal from Gaza, we feel a deep sense of urgency that our government not sit on the sidelines. Israelis and Palestinians need America's help. In Seattle, we are forming a Jewish, Christian, Muslim interreligious initiative committed to appeal to our congregations and communities to press the Administration and members of Congress for determined, fair and firm U.S. leadership in pursuit of peace. In this way we believe the power of moderate religious voices can push extremism to the margin, give hope to people in the region, and foster the use of American power for building the road to peace in the Middle East

\* \* \* \*

The Rev. Wm. Chris Boerger, Bishop, Northwest Washington Synod, ELCA;  
Hisham Farajallah, Islamic Center of Washington; and Rabbi James L. Mirel  
President, Coalition of Washington Rabbis  
(Organizations for Identification only.)



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## Prayers for Peace in the Middle East

Sustain together in undiminished hope, O God of hope,  
those who continue to labor with undiminished determination  
to build peace in the land from which, of old,  
out of brokenness, violence and destruction,  
nevertheless hope emerged for so many of faith. . . .

Bless all the spiritual seed of Abraham together  
with the light of your Presence.

For in the light of your Presence  
we have found a way of justice and mercy  
and a vision of Peace.

We praise you O God, Giver of Peace,  
who commands us to Peace. *Amen*

**Rabbi Herbert Bronstein**

*Northshore Congregation Israel, Glencoe, IL*

God of mercy and compassion,  
of grace and reconciliation,  
pour your power upon all your children in the Middle East:  
Jews, Muslims and Christians,  
Palestinians and Israelis.

Let hatred be turned into love, fear to trust, despair to hope,  
oppression to freedom, occupation to liberation,  
that violent encounters may be replaced by loving embraces,  
and peace and justice could be experienced by all. *Amen.*

**The Reverend Said Ailabouni**

*Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, IL*

Almighty God!

After almost a century of mistrust and fratricide,  
you inspired Jews, Christians and Muslims  
to take the path of reconciliation in the Middle East. . . .

We ask for your forgiveness, O God,  
yet we find it hard to forgive our past enemies.

May Your Words touch those who still stray  
in the wilderness of vengeful violence,  
forgetting your command to "forgive and overlook,  
till God accomplish His Purpose;  
for God hath power over all things." *Amen*

**Abdelwahab Hechiche**

*University of South Florida, Tampa, FL*

O God Source of Life, Creator of Peace. . .  
Help Your children, anguished and confused,  
To understand the futility of hatred and violence  
And grant them the ability to stretch across  
Political, religious and national boundaries  
So they may confront horror and fear  
By continuing together  
In the search for justice, peace and truth. . . .  
With every fiber of our being  
We beg You, O God,  
To help us not to fail nor falter. *Amen*

**Rabbi H. Rolando Matalon**  
*Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, New York, NY*

Lord God, we turn to you in these trying hours when  
conflict is a daily reality for our sisters and brothers  
in Israel and Palestine. We promise you to work to our  
utmost for peace and reconciliation in the region. But we  
know we cannot do it alone. We very much need the strength  
of your presence in our midst if we are to overcome the  
obstacles before us. So our prayer at this moment is that  
you add your support to our efforts, that you show yourself  
as a tower of strength in those moments when the barriers  
seem impassable. Together we can become beacons of hope  
for just and peaceful societies in the land so very dear  
to the peoples of your covenant. *Amen.*

**Reverend John T. Pawlikowski, OSM**  
*Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL*

In the Name of God, The Everlasting Merciful, The Cherisher  
Of the Worlds and Worthy of all Praise,  
Our Lord: You have created us from a single (pair) of a male  
And a female and made us into Nations and Tribes that we may  
Know one another (not that we may despise each other) so  
Help us to love each other and take the hatred and anger from our  
Hearts so that the People of The Book (Christians, Jews and Muslims)  
In the Middle East may live in Peace and Justice. *Amen*

**Dawud Ahmad Assad**  
*Council of Mosques, USA, New York, NY*

Two peoples, one land,  
Three faiths, one root,  
One earth, one mother,  
One sky, one beginning, one future, one destiny,  
One broken heart,  
One God.  
We pray to You:  
Grant us a vision of unity.  
May we see the many in the one and the one in the many.  
May you, Life of All the Worlds, Source of All Amazing Differences  
Help us to see clearly.  
Guide us gently and firmly toward each other,  
Toward peace. *Amen.*

**Rabbi Sheila Weinberg**  
*Jewish Community of Amherst, Amherst, MA*

O God of peace, you have established Jerusalem as the Lord's House and a place of peace, and you have called on all who live there to love you and prosper. Instill in her inhabitants - Jews, Christians and Muslims - a hunger for justice and dignity and a resolve to end the distrust that culminates in violence. Grant them the wisdom and patience to build a city where Israeli and Palestinian reside in safety, free from oppression and committed to the good of all.

In this endeavor, make everyone of us agents of your peace, O God. Forgive us our indifference and stamp out the prejudices that lead to hatred. Fill us with the reconciling spirit of your presence. So may we join people of good will - in the Middle East and throughout the world - who raise before Jerusalem's gates their insistent Shalom and Salaam: "Peace be within your walls. . . .Peace be within you." *Amen.*

**The Reverends Harry and Judith Hoehler**  
*First Parish (Unitarian-Universalist), Weston, MA*

In the name of God, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful:  
Guide us on the straight way, the way of those whom thou has blessed.  
Help us so that we do not transgress the bounds of what is right and lawful.  
Take us out of deep darkness into light.  
Make us not bear burdens which we have no strength to bear.  
Help us bring about mutual affection and understanding between us.  
Grant us Thy forgiveness and blessings, O Our Sustainer,  
for with Thee is all journeys' end. *Amen.*

**Mian Ashraf**  
*New England Islamic Center, Sharon, MA*

**Selections on the Imperative for Peace  
from Jewish, Christian and Islamic Sacred Texts**

*from the **Hebrew Bible***

Genesis 13:6-9; Numbers 6:24-26; Psalm 34:15; Psalm 85:7-13;  
Psalm 122; Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-5; and Proverbs 3:13-18

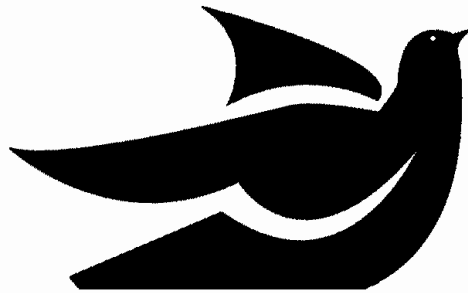
*from the **New Testament***

Matthew 5:1-11, 21-24 and 43-44; Luke 6:32 and 35-36; John 17:20-21;  
Romans 14:19; Ephesians 2:13-14 and 6:12-17; and Hebrews 12:14

*from the **Holy Quran***

Sura 3:20, 84 and 133-134; Sura 4:90; Sura 5:32; Sura 6:54; Sura 8:61;  
Sura 14:23; Sura 16:90; Sura 17:70; Sura 19:62; Sura 41:34; Sura 42:40 and 43

Compiled by  
**U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East**  
16020 94<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, Stanwood, WA 98292  
Tel/Fax: (360) 652-4285; E-Mail: USICPME@aol.com  
Consultant: Ronald J. Young



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



**Remarks By  
His Eminence William Cardinal Keeler  
Archbishop of Baltimore**

**National Interreligious Leadership Initiative  
for Peace in the Middle East**

**National Press Club  
January 12, 2005**

It is both an honor and a personal pleasure to be here with my colleagues in the Interreligious Initiative for Peace in the Middle East. We believe in the same one God and know that God calls us to find the common path to a just peace in the land we all call “Holy.” In the words of the Psalmist, we labor for the day when “justice and peace will kiss” (Psalm 85:11).

I come as a Catholic bishop who has for many years engaged in interfaith and ecumenical work, the Jewish-Catholic Dialogue, and interreligious partnerships that have led to wonderful friendships with many Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious leaders. I feel especially close to those within the interreligious community with whom I have worked on the cause of peace in the Middle East.

We are here today as religious leaders of three traditions, but with one purpose—to pursue a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians. As Jews, Christians and Muslims we do not come here to take sides in the dispute, but rather to take the side of peace with justice.

We gather at a time of great change that may bring the promise of peace closer. Pope John Paul II, in a recent address to diplomats, stated: “In the Middle East, the land so dear and sacred to believers in the God of Abraham, armed confrontation appears to be decreasing, with the hope of a political breakthrough in the direction of dialogue and negotiation.” We in the Interreligious Initiative share this hope.

Israel has embarked on a plan to withdraw from some of the occupied territories. The Palestinians have elected a new President. And our own nation’s President is about to begin his second term. These events create a new opportunity to work for a peaceful and just resolution of this long conflict that has inflicted terrible suffering on both Palestinians and Israelis. The time for bold new leadership is now.

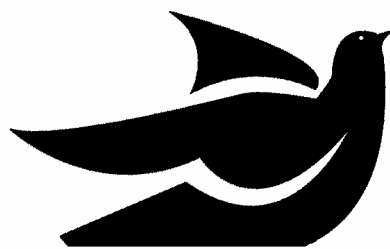
Here in our nation’s capital, we urge President Bush to help Israelis and Palestinians come together to make peace. This task should be an immediate priority in his second term. The religious community is also making peace a priority. Both at the national level and in local cities throughout the country, religious leaders of our three traditions are meeting to build bridges of understanding and to press the case for peace. In fifteen cities stretching from Seattle, Washington to Charlotte, North Carolina, religious leaders are forging partnerships and engaging public officials in making peace a priority. From my personal experience in Baltimore and at the national level, I can attest to the energy and commitment that religious leaders are bringing to

this task.

I might add we are also working within our respective faith communities. For example, this week Bishop William Skylstad, the President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is in the Holy Land with other Catholic leaders. They had a substantive and positive meeting with the President of Israel and are scheduled to meet with the newly elected President of the Palestinian Authority today.

The Interreligious Initiative has shared with President Bush a framework for building a just peace. This framework promotes a two-state solution with security for both peoples. We have assured the President of our support as the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority walk step-by-step along the road to justice and peace in the Holy Land.

Our prayer is for peace and justice. Our hope is for Palestinians and Israelis. May God bless the land we call Holy with justice and peace for all.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



**Remarks in the Holy Land to Presidents  
of Israel and the Palestinian Authority  
A statement read by Bishop William Skylstad  
at meetings between  
Members of the Episcopal Co-Ordination for the Holy Land and  
President Moshe Katsav of Israel on January 11, 2005 and  
President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority on  
January 13, 2005**

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to meet you.

We come in the footsteps of two pilgrims to the Holy Land, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. We are completely united with the Christians of the Holy Land as they affirm the teaching of Pope Paul VI that peace is brought about through justice for all, and as they stand resolutely with Pope John Paul II in his consistent rejection of any form of violence as a road to peace.

We visit you at a time of great political potential. We know our native countries have helped to shape the history of this Land. We are determined that the issues which touch the lives and hopes of all in the Holy Land shall not be neglected. On our return, we will use every opportunity to share with our own communities and governments what we have heard and seen in parishes, in Bethlehem's wonderful university—whose story is followed with great interest in many countries—and in schools and hospitals, as well as in Galilee.

At this important moment, we seek to encourage and support all who strive for justice and so pursue peace and those practical steps that will enable the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to live in this Land, with dignity, in two states, in security and equity.

We affirm and stand with the Church in the Holy Land, with the Patriarch, the pastors and people, in their unique witness to the faith we share with them. With the whole Church, we are committed to the survival and vitality of the Christian community in this Land where Jesus was born, died, was buried and rose again.

The importance of the Fundamental/Basic Agreement between Israel/the PLO and the Holy See is clear to us, and we urge its full enactment and implementation without delay.

We will work for a just peace in this Land and seek to engage our local Churches and countries in this task. The entire world has a stake in justice and peace here.

At this hopeful moment our prayers are with all who share this Land: Israelis and Palestinians, Christians, Jews and Muslims, that we will very soon see decisive action and courageous steps to bring an end to violence and injustice and accomplish peace and reconciliation in the Land we all call Holy.

Thank you, Mr. President, and Shalom/Salaam.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



**Remarks By  
His Eminence Cardinal Theodore E.  
McCarrick  
Archbishop of Washington**

**National Interreligious Leadership Delegation  
in Support of the Road Map for Peace in the Middle East**

**National Press Club  
December 2, 2003**

I am honored to be here with this extraordinary group of religious leaders. We are united in our common call to our nation to do everything it can to overcome and resist violence and to pursue the path of justice and peace in the land we all call "Holy."

I come as a Catholic bishop with long and close ties to the Jewish community in this country and with an active and growing dialogue with the Muslim community. The Catholic Church strongly supports both the survival and security of Israel and a free and viable state for Palestinians. In the global picture, we believe that failure to achieve a just peace in this critical area imperils the quest for peace and security in the Middle East and in the world itself.

Each of us here knows all too well how much our Jewish, Muslim and Christian brothers and sisters are suffering. This is why we come together -- not to take sides, but to insist and plead that our government use its enormous influence to press Israeli and Palestinian leaders to move beyond the paralysis of the moment and do everything to advance the prospects for a just peace, and nothing to diminish them. Israelis and Palestinians are the ones who must create a just peace, but the United States has a moral obligation to use its powerful influence to help them do this. President Bush committed the United States to this kind of U.S. leadership when he outlined the Road Map. Together, we urge him and all our national leaders to take up again this process which can lead to a just peace.

Many who know a lot more about this than I do believe that there is an opportunity at this moment for the United States to exercise this moral leadership. The many cross-community civil society initiatives that are underway are one indication of a growing conviction that peace is still possible. We believe the vast majority of Americans, as well as Israelis and Palestinians, will support more active, determined U.S. and international efforts to help revive the peace process.

Specifically, in order to renew momentum in the Road Map, we urge the following:

1. The United States should strongly reiterate the Road Map's unequivocal call for an end to all acts of violence and work actively with the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli Government and Arab states to achieve and maintain a ceasefire agreement.

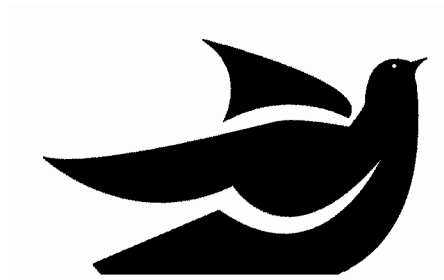
2. In exercising more active, determined leadership, there is a need to have a consistent, United States engagement and the visible presence of the special Presidential Envoy, together with active, public monitoring of the implementation of the Road Map by both sides.
3. The Road Map calls for parallel and simultaneous steps by each side to begin to address the core concerns of the other side. The United States, in coordination with the Quartet, should spell out specific steps each side must take, along with an explicit timetable. (Rabbi Menitoff and Imam Rauf will elaborate on these difficult but essential steps.)

For our part, we will share today's initiative with the 300 Catholic bishops in the United States and their diocesan networks, with our counterparts in the Holy Land, with the Holy See, and with episcopal conferences around the world we will urge them to join us in a common effort.

In January, Bishop Wilton Gregory, the president of our bishops' conference and a signatory of our document, will share this initiative at a meeting that will involve all the Catholic bishops in the Holy Land as well as leaders of other bishops' conferences.

Finally, we will use this initiative as a complement to our continued advocacy with our own government and Congress for strong U.S. leadership for peace in the Middle East.

This is Advent, a season of special hope for Christians, but our hearts are breaking because of what is happening in the land where Jesus was born. The leadership of President Bush, advanced so clearly in the Road Map, together with the active engagement of other national leaders in the coming weeks and months will be crucial for overcoming the bitter legacy of violence and for building confidence that, even in the face of setbacks, the peace process can be put back on track. This is a crucial time for U.S. leadership, creativity and perseverance. It is also a time for hope.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



**Statement on Israeli-Palestinian Violence**  
**Administrative Committee**  
**U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops**  
**March 13, 2002**

The horrible cycle of violence, occupation, and terror in the Middle East must be brought to an end. Every day, more Palestinians and Israelis lose their lives, and every day, many more are losing their hopes for a future of dignity, security and peace.

We call on Catholics in this nation to join with us in fervent prayer and greater advocacy for a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. As citizens, we urge our government to use every means to persuade leaders on both sides to turn away from actions which permit, incite or employ violence and to return to the search for peace based on mutual respect and equal justice for Palestinians and Israelis. Nothing is gained by demonizing one side or the other in this conflict. The human and moral imperative now is for a just peace based on understanding, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

It is clearer now than ever before that the status quo is unacceptable. Israeli occupation cannot be sustained – militarily or morally – nor can the indiscriminate use of force in civilian areas. Palestinian attacks on innocent civilians cannot be tolerated – both because they are morally indefensible and because they undermine the legitimate claims of the Palestinian people. This deadly cycle of action and reaction, suicide bombing, and aggressive attacks must be ended.

As we said in our statement last June, sustained U.S. leadership, in cooperation with others in the international community, is required to encourage, persuade and insist that both parties take the steps necessary to end the violence, rapidly resolve the differences between them and begin to live in peace together. We must make clear that attacks on civilians must end, whether they are carried out in shopping malls by suicide bombers or in refugee camps by military units. We must insist that the parties embrace an immediate cease-fire and return to the arduous task of negotiating a just peace, without delay or pre-conditions. Only negotiation can lead to an end to violence and occupation, a secure state for Israel and a viable state for Palestinians.

We hope the return to the region of General Anthony Zinni, the encouraging proposals from Saudi Arabia, and elements of the Mitchell and Tenet reports can provide the basis for new and urgent diplomatic efforts to replace bloody conflict with serious dialogue based in respect for relevant UN resolutions, such as that just approved by the Security Council, and other provisions of international law. Real peace and security will not come from terror or tanks, but only from a determination to find the ways for both Israelis and Palestinians to live together with dignity, justice and peace.

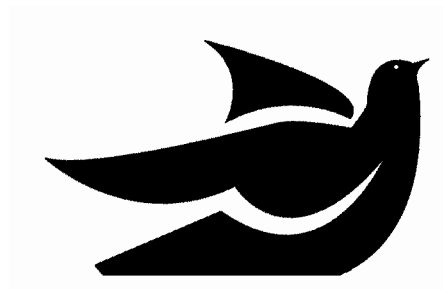
We stand with the Church in the Holy Land, which has not escaped the violence, as evidenced by the damage inflicted on Bethlehem University, St. Joseph's School, the Creche maternity clinic and other church institutions. We join with leaders of the Christian community in the Holy Land in their haunting question: "Is this the future that we all want for our children?" We share their conviction that "the key to a just peace is in the hands of both the Israeli Government and the

Palestinian Authority. War, shelling, and destruction will not bring justice and security; rather, it will intensify hatred and bitterness.” We share their belief “that Israeli and Palestinian peoples are called to be partners in an historic peace.”

Speaking out of the tragic circumstances of this ongoing conflict, the Christian leaders of the Holy Land have said: “Our prayers for peace are more urgently needed than ever.” May Catholics throughout this nation join us in imploring God for justice, peace and reconciliation in the land we call “holy.”

May we heed the words of the Psalmist: “I will hear what God proclaims; for He proclaims peace to his people, and to his faithful ones, and to those who put in Him their hope” (Ps 85, 9).

Note: General Anthony Zinni, the U.S. special envoy, is on a peace mission that, among other things, seeks to encourage the parties to implement a truce negotiated last June by CIA Director George Tenet and to implement detailed proposals for a return to negotiations issued last May by an international commission headed by George Mitchell. The Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah has recently called for a peace settlement based on the establishment of a Palestinian State in the territories now occupied by Israel and normalization of relations between Arab governments and Israel.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## **Resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian Crisis**

**A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops,  
June 15, 2001**

During the last nine months we have watched with sorrow and dismay as opportunities for peace in the Middle East have been lost in a spiral of violence. This violence is clearly seen in the destruction of so many homes, in the growing number of wounded and disabled, and most of all in the number of Palestinians and Israelis who have lost their lives, including many children and youth. This cycle of violence has exacerbated an already dangerous situation and dimmed prospects for peace. In this time of darkness, we make our own the prayer of Pope John Paul II:

The terms of the Middle East drama are well known: The Jewish people, after tragic experiences connected with the extermination of so many sons and daughters, driven by the desire for security, set up the State of Israel. At the same time the painful condition of the Palestinian people was created, a large part of whom are excluded from their land.... Gathered here today, we present to the One God, to the Living God, to the Father of all, the problems of peace in the Middle East and also the problem, which is so dear to us, of the rapport and real dialogue with those with whom we are united--in spite of the differences--by faith in one God, the faith inherited from Abraham. May the spirit of unity, mutual respect, and understanding prove to be more powerful than what divides and sets in opposition (Homily at Otranto, Italy, Oct. 5, 1980).

In this spirit, we reiterate our strong call of November 2000: "The only acceptable option is an end to the violence, respect for the basic human rights of all, and a return to the path of peace." (U.S. Catholic Conference, November 15, 2000.) A way must be found to return quickly to genuine negotiations, embracing, as far as possible, the gains made in the last rounds of final status talks. We deeply regret that the negotiations last summer and fall did not achieve a lasting settlement. Despite that failure and recent, terrible events, it is not too late to embrace nonviolence, dialogue and negotiation as the only road forward. The steps toward a just and lasting peace remain the same: real security for the State of Israel, a viable state for Palestinians, just resolution of the refugee problem, an agreement on Jerusalem which protects religious freedom and other basic rights,<sup>1</sup> an equitable sharing of resources, especially water, and implementation of relevant UN resolutions and other provisions of international law.<sup>2</sup> These steps will pave the way to a future of cooperation and accommodation rather than occupation and conflict.

As supporters of the State of Israel and a state for Palestinians, we recognize that each side in this conflict has deep, long-standing and legitimate grievances that must be addressed if there is to be a just and lasting peace.

It is necessary for all to recognize that Palestinians rightly insist on an end to Israel's three-decade-long occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and to the continued establishment and expansion of settlements. Palestinians see this occupation, maintained by force and marked by

daily indignities, abuse and violence, as a central underlying cause of the present crisis. Israel has a fundamental right to security, but security will not be won by ongoing annexation of Palestinian land, blockades, air strikes on cities, destruction of crops and homes, and other excessive uses of force.

It is also necessary for all to recognize that Israelis rightly see the failure of Palestinians to demonstrate full respect for Israel's right to exist and flourish within secure borders as a fundamental cause of the conflict. Palestinian leaders must clearly renounce violence and terrorist acts against innocent civilians, take effective steps to stop them, and bring to justice those responsible. The violence undermines the trust required to make peace and weakens the Palestinian search for justice. The Palestinian Authority must show the Israeli people that it is fully committed to prepare its people to live in peace with Israel.

These times call for new attitudes on the part of all the parties to the conflict. "We all know," the Holy Father said during his recent visit to Syria, "that real peace can only be achieved if there is a new attitude of understanding and respect between the peoples of the region, between the followers of the three Abrahamic religions.... [I]t is important that there be an evolution in the way the peoples of the region see one another and that at every level of society the principles of peaceful coexistence be taught and promoted" (Remarks upon arrival in Damascus, Syria, May 5, 2001).

In the same spirit, this is a moment that requires that more Palestinian leaders and supporters of the Palestinian cause not simply advocate a Palestinian state, but also be unambiguously clear about Israel's right to peace and security, and the imperative to end all violence. This moment equally requires that more Israeli leaders and supporters of the State of Israel not only defend Israel and her people, but also advocate for the legitimate aspiration of Palestinians to live in their own homeland with dignity. At the same time, each community must refrain from inciting hatred against the other. We pray that the voices urging respect for the rights and aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians will be heeded by their leaders and people. The just claims of both peoples should also enjoy the active support of Christians throughout the world. Civic, educational and religious leaders should be challenged to refrain from fanning the flames of ethnic and religious prejudice and be encouraged to promote a process of reconciliation without which peace will never be a reality.

While peace will ultimately spring from new attitudes and new ways of acting on the part of Palestinians and Israelis, our government, as well as the entire international community, must be actively engaged, in appropriate and significant ways, in working for a just and comprehensive solution to this conflict. We expect that they will do so in a way that responds respectfully to the legitimate claims and expectations of both parties, and does not acquiesce in unilateral actions which undermine negotiations.

As Catholics in the United States, we have a special concern for the toll the Israeli-Palestinian struggle is taking on the Christian communities in the area. The native-born Christian presence in Israel and the occupied territories, less than two per-cent of the total, risks shrinking into insignificance, in no small part due to the present troubles and their human and economic consequences. Other developments, such as the concerns of Christians about the Nazareth

mosque, only exacerbate a sense of marginalization. As a result of these and other factors, the future of a living Christian presence in the Holy Land is in doubt. The Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, himself a Palestinian from Nazareth, has pleaded with families to remain as faithful witnesses to the Gospel in the Holy Land. Regrettably, many families have already emigrated and many more are tempted to do so. Partnerships with Catholic parishes in the Holy Land are one way to encourage the Christian presence there.

Mindful of our historic debt to the Church in the Holy Land and our duties of solidarity to a sister church in severe need, we ask Catholics in the United States to join in strengthening the Church there during the present crisis and supporting its work for a just peace. We urge Catholics to be much more conscious of and give much greater attention to the crisis in the Middle East, and do what they can to support a living Christian presence in the land of Jesus' birth. We urge them to be unflagging in pressing our government to play an active and constructive role in the search for a just peace. We urge them to reach out in dialogue and joint action with Jews, Muslims and other Christians in this country. Finally, we urge them to support generously the urgent relief and development work of Catholic Relief Services, the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of the Holy Land, and other worthy initiatives. The efforts of these and other organizations would be severely undermined if the U.S. government were to cut off humanitarian aid for the occupied territories, as some are proposing.

We pray that the God of peace, who has called us to be ambassadors of reconciliation, will achieve what human means alone cannot. Confident in God's blessings, we ask U.S. Catholics to join us through their prayers, their fasting and their good works in assisting Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Muslims and Christians, in securing justice and peace in the Holy Land.

<sup>1</sup> The question of Jerusalem involves two aspects. Territorial sovereignty is a bilateral question for Israelis and the Palestinian Authority to resolve equitably and by negotiations according to UN Resolutions. The religious dimension of Jerusalem, especially the "Old City," involves the need to preserve its unique and sacred character, both the Holy Places and the living communities of believers there. In order to safeguard the religious and human dimensions of Jerusalem, the Holy See has long advocated a special statute, internationally guaranteed. This statute would secure: (1) freedom of religion and conscience for all; (2) the juridical equality of the three monotheistic religions; (3) respect for the identity and sacred character of the City; (4) protection of and freedom of access for all to the Holy Places; (5) the regime of "status quo" in Holy Places where it applies. This statute, to be negotiated by the two parties in consultation with the three religious communities, could be guaranteed by the UN, the sponsors of the peace process, or another entity, but, in any case, should be sanctioned by the United Nations.

<sup>2</sup> Among the pertinent UN Resolutions are nos. 242, 338, and 194.



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## Summary of the Geneva Accord

**Israeli-Palestinian Civil Society Initiative  
Signed in Geneva December 1, 2003**

The Geneva Accord (or Initiative) is an unofficial framework for peace which has been negotiated by members and former members of the Israeli and Palestinian governments, hosted by Switzerland. The Israeli team was headed by Yossi Beilin, Minister of Justice in the Government headed by Yitzhak Rabin, and the Palestinian team was headed by Yasser Abed Rabbo, former senior official in the Palestinian Authority. This civil society initiative offers benchmark principles and ideas for realistic compromises for mutually acceptable peace, including on crucial, sensitive issues, i.e., borders, security, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem.

### **The Geneva Accord between Israel and Palestine includes:**

“Reaffirming their determination to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, and to live in peaceful coexistence, mutual dignity and security based on a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace and achieving historic reconciliation;

“Recognizing that peace requires the transition from the logic of war and confrontation to the logic of peace and cooperation, and that acts and words characteristic of the state of war are neither appropriate nor acceptable in the era of peace;

“Affirming their deep belief that the logic of peace requires compromise, and that the only viable solution is a two-state solution based on UNSC Resolution 242 and 338;

“Affirming that this agreement marks the recognition of the right of the Jewish people to statehood and the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to statehood;

“Recognizing that after years of living in mutual fear and insecurity, both peoples need to enter an era of peace, security and stability, entailing all necessary actions by the parties to guarantee the realization of this era;

“Recognizing each other's right to peaceful and secure existence within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

“Determined to establish relations based on cooperation and the commitment to live side by side as good neighbors aiming both separately and jointly to contribute to the well-being of their peoples;

“Declaring that this Agreement marks the historic reconciliation between the Palestinians and Israelis, and paves the way to reconciliation between the Arab World and Israel and the establishment of normal, peaceful relations between the Arab states and Israel in accordance with the relevant clauses of the Beirut Arab League Resolution of March 28, 2002;...”

Representatives from Israel and Palestine signed the Geneva Initiative (Accord) which presents detailed maps and concrete arrangements and that constitute a final settlement of the major issues

between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, including:

Israel will return to its pre-1967 borders with minor border modifications including the trade of land on a 1:1 basis.

Israel will withdraw settlers from the Palestinian areas.

Israel will create a corridor for travel between the West Bank and Gaza, which will remain under Israeli sovereignty and under Palestinian administration and run in accord with Palestinian law.

Israel and Palestine will establish cooperative security measures and disband all non-governmental armed bands or militias within their territories, and shall work together to create regional security free from all weapons of mass destruction. Palestine will be a non-militarized state with a strong security force that will maintain border security, police functions, and prevent terrorism.

Without prejudice to freedom of expression and other internationally recognized human rights, Israel and Palestine shall promulgate laws to prevent incitement to irredentism, racism, terrorism and violence and vigorously enforce them.

A Multinational Force will be established to provide security guarantees to the Parties, act as a deterrent, against external attacks on either party to the agreement, protect the territorial integrity of the State of Palestine, and oversee the implementation of the relevant provisions of this Agreement

Jerusalem will become capital of both states. The Temple Mount and East Jerusalem will be under Palestinian control and the Wall and West Jerusalem under Israeli control. The Old City will be open, weapons forbidden, free travel inside to all sectors guaranteed.

Refugees will be compensated both for loss of property and for their refugeehood. They can be resettled in Palestine, in host countries where they currently live, in other countries who agree to accept them, and Israel can, at its sovereign decision, bring in a number of refugees (though it is not mandated to do so at any particular number). An International Commission will be established to supervise the resettlement and compensation for refugees.

All Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons will be released over the course of the next 30 months after the governments agree to the Accord.

A Resource from the  
National Interreligious Initiative for Peace  
Telephone/Fax: (360) 652-3736  
E-mail: usicpme@aol.com or



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute



## The People's Voice Peace Initiative

*An Israeli-Palestinian civil society Initiative developed by Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, President of Al Quds University in Jerusalem and Ami Ayalon, former head of the Israeli security service, Shin Bet. In early 2004 the Initiative had more than 150,000 Israeli and 125,000 Palestinian endorsers. This initiative, like the Geneva Accord, offers benchmark principles and ideas for realistic compromises for mutually acceptable peace, including on crucial, sensitive issues such as borders, security, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem.*

The Palestinian people and the Jewish people each recognize the other's historic rights with respect to the same land.

The Jewish people has for generations wanted to establish the Jewish State in all the Land of Israel, while the Palestinian people has similarly wanted to establish a state in all of Palestine.

The two sides hereby agree to accept a historic compromise based on the principle of two sovereign and viable states existing side by side. The following Statement of Intentions is an expression of the will of the majority of the people. Both sides believe that through this initiative they can influence their leaders and thereby open a new chapter in the region's history. This new chapter will be realized by calling on the international community to guarantee security in the region and to help in rehabilitating and developing the region's economy.

### The People's Voice- Statement of Intentions

1. Two states for two peoples: Both sides will declare that Palestine is the only state of the Palestinian people and Israel is the only state of the Jewish people.
2. Borders: Permanent borders between the two states will be agreed on the basis of the June 4, 1967 lines, UN resolutions and the Arab peace initiative (known as the Saudi initiative).
  - Border modifications will be based on an equal territorial exchange (1:1) in accordance with the vital needs of both sides, including security, territorial contiguity, and demographic considerations.
  - The Palestinian State will have a connection between its two geographic areas, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
  - After establishment of the agreed borders, no settlers will remain in the Palestinian state.
3. Jerusalem: Jerusalem will be an open city, the capital of two states. Freedom of religion and full access to holy sites will be guaranteed to all.
  - Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem will come under Palestinian sovereignty; Jewish neighborhoods under Israeli sovereignty.

- Neither side will exercise sovereignty over the holy places. The State of Palestine will be designated Guardian of the Temple Mount for the benefit of Muslims. Israel will be the Guardian of the Western Wall for the benefit of the Jewish people. The status quo on Christian holy sites will be maintained. No excavation will take place in or underneath the holy sites.

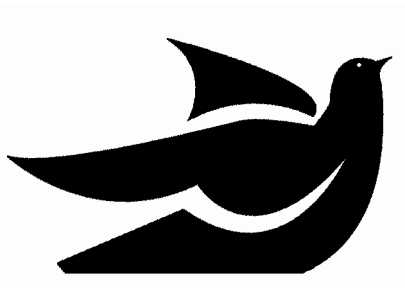
4. Right of return: Recognizing the suffering and the plight of the Palestinian refugees, the international community, Israel, and the Palestinian State will initiate and contribute to an international fund to compensate them.

- Palestinian refugees will return only to the State of Palestine; Jews will return only to the State of Israel.

5. The Palestinian State will be demilitarized and the international community will guarantee its security and independence.

6. End of conflict: Upon the full implementation of these principles, all claims on both sides and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will end.

A Resource from the  
National Interreligious Initiative for Peace  
Telephone/Fax: (360) 652-3736  
E-mail: usicpme@aol.com or



Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 4th Street, N.E., Washington, DC 20017-1194 (202) 541-3000  
Please feel free to copy and distribute