



**TAKE ACTION!!**

January 2, 2009

**THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON THE HOLY LAND IS ENGULFED IN VIOLENCE:  
URGE PRESIDENT BUSH TO HELP NEGOTIATE A CEASEFIRE NOW**

**TAKE ACTION NOW!** [Visit the CRS Action Center](#) now to contact President Bush and urge him to send a high level personal representative to the Holy Land immediately to help negotiate a ceasefire and ensure that the people of Gaza receive humanitarian assistance.

**WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE HOLY LAND?** Escalating violence between Hamas, the Palestinian party that controls Gaza, and Israel has caused death, destruction and great suffering in recent days among Israelis and Palestinian civilians. Unjustified rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and the disproportionate Israeli military actions causing unacceptable casualties among Palestinian civilians will have serious negative effects on any progress in peace negotiations and risk a wider war.

**WHY SHOULD CATHOLICS CARE ABOUT THE HOLY LAND?** Our Catholic faith teaches us to be peacemakers. 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."

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

[In a December 30 letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#) Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), wrote:

"At a time when the attention of Christians is drawn naturally to the birthplace of the Prince of Peace, it is tragic that innocent civilians are once again the victims of armed conflict and a humanitarian crisis." A ceasefire and humanitarian relief are indispensable initial steps on the road to a two-state solution—a secure Israel living in peace with a viable Palestinian state—with justice and peace for both peoples."

**WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH DOING TO PROMOTE PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND?** In 2005, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) launched the [Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land](#). The campaign's 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. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has worked in the Holy Land for nearly half a century, supporting peace with justice for all people, while responding to the humanitarian and sustainable development needs of Palestinians.

Together, USCCB and CRS are advocating for stronger U.S. leadership to hold both parties to the conflict accountable in building a just peace. We also support U.S. funding for the Palestinian Authority to increase its ability to govern as well as urgently needed humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people.

**For more information contact:**

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