



**TAKE ACTION!!**

February 13, 2009

## URGE CONGRESS TO SUPPORT WHITE HOUSE HOLY LAND PEACE EFFORTS

**TAKE ACTION NOW!** Visit the CRS Action Center (<http://actioncenter.crs.org>) now to ask your members of Congress to cosponsor House Resolution 130 in support of the Administration's efforts to secure a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Check here (<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d111:HE00130:@@P>) to find out if your Member has already signed the resolution and if so, please thank your Member.

**WHAT DOES H. RES. 130 DO?** (1) Congratulates Senator George Mitchell on his appointment as Special Envoy for Middle East Peace; (2) Supports the Administration's efforts for a diplomatic resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the establishment of two states – Israel and Palestine - living side by side in peace and security, and with recognized borders; (3) Reaffirms that peace between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel and the Arab world are essential national security interests of the United States; (4) Expresses its appreciation to those engaged in support of Middle East peacemaking and the recent cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel, and (5) Calls on the international community to aggressively pursue efforts that facilitate a just and lasting resolution of these conflicts.

**WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE HOLY LAND?** In the land that is considered holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims terrible violence and conflict have left both Israelis and Palestinians suffering. The recent violence between Hamas, the Palestinian party controlling Gaza, and Israel has caused hundreds of deaths and massive destruction in Gaza and suffering among Palestinian and Israeli civilians. Hamas refuses to renounce violence and recognize Israel. Indefensible suicide bombings and rocket attacks on civilian areas have terrorized Israelis. Four decades of occupation coupled with expanding settlements, the Security Wall, and restrictions on the movement of people and goods have devastated the Palestinian economy. Poverty rates among Palestinians are nearly 65 percent and food insecurity has risen 13 percent since 2006.

**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.

**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 in need. USCCB joined the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East in endorsing H.R. 130.

**For more information contact:**

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