



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

June 18, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2100 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

The escalating tensions between the United States and Iran motivate this letter. Obviously, these tensions create additional risks of conflict in an extremely volatile region. Allies, as well as military and diplomatic experts, have pointed to the rising dangers that could be triggered by miscalculation or misinformation.

At the time of the adoption of the P5+1 agreement with Iran, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace expressed "hope that the full implementation of the agreement will gradually foster an environment in which all parties build mutual confidence and trust, so that progress will be made toward greater stability and dialogue in the region." That hope took shape as Iran was judged to be in compliance with the agreement by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the international community. We warned, however, that "the alternative leads toward armed conflict, an outcome of profound concern to the Church."

The unilateral U.S. withdrawal from agreement with Iran and the imposition of crippling economic sanctions seem to have contributed to a pattern of heated rhetoric on the part of both Iran and the United States. The moves have also exacerbated tensions with close allies and other world powers. For its part, Iran has continued its verbal threats against Israel and the arming of various militia groups in the region. In the absence of real diplomatic dialogue, military deployments and perceived threats on both sides increase risks of confrontation. It is ironic and troubling that, in response to sanctions, Iran has threatened to resume some activities that potentially violate the P5+ 1 agreement.

The Church consistently champions dialogue and engagement as ways to resolve political crises. Our teachings on war and peace only permit the use of military force as a "last resort" and in situations where there is a "probability of success." There is little probability that another war in the most volatile region in the world, where the recent and current experiences of conflict in Syria, Iraq and Yemen are vivid, will succeed in bringing peace to the region. A different approach is needed. The President's recent statement that the United States does not seek war with Iran is encouraging.

It is my sincere hope that the United States will initiate sustained dialogue with allies, world powers and Iran, in order to deescalate the current situation that is a danger to both the region and the world.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace