



## *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

December 3, 2012

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

Recent reports have indicated that Congress may consider legislation that seeks to “punish” Palestinians for achieving a higher status at the United Nations. Such legislation would not be consistent with U.S. efforts to seek a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land; it would distract and detract from this goal. Assistance to Palestinians, already heavily conditioned, is essential for humanitarian purposes and for building capacity for a future Palestinian state. Cutting aid will only harm the peace process. This is not in the interests of either Israelis or Palestinians who long for peace.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reiterates its support for a two-state solution—a secure and recognized Israel living alongside an independent and viable Palestinian state—and notes that aid to the Palestinians furthers this goal. The Palestinian Authority and President Abbas’ Fatah party have renounced violence and committed themselves, as has Israel, to a two-state solution.

The Holy See welcomed the UN decision, noting that in 1947 the UN General Assembly had called for “two States, one of which has not been constituted,” but acknowledged that the current vote is not “a sufficient solution to the existing problems in the Region” and called for an “effective commitment to building peace and stability, in justice and in the respect for legitimate aspirations, both of the Israelis and of the Palestinians.”

With the Holy See we encourage the parties “to restart the negotiations in good faith and to avoid actions, ... which would contradict the declarations of goodwill and the sincere search for solutions...” and appeal to our own nation “to increase its commitment” to help achieve “a lasting peace, that respects the rights of Israelis and of Palestinians.”

As our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, said during his historic 2009 visit to Israel and Palestine: “No more bloodshed! No more fighting! No more terrorism! No more war! Instead let us break the vicious circle of violence. Let there be lasting peace based on justice, let there be genuine reconciliation and healing. Let it be universally recognized that the State of Israel has the right to exist, and to enjoy peace and security within internationally agreed borders. Let it be likewise acknowledged that the Palestinian people have a right to a sovereign independent homeland, to live with dignity and to travel freely. Let the two-state solution become a reality, not remain a dream.”

We ask you to resist efforts to cut off needed humanitarian and development assistance to Palestinians as they build capacity for a future state.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates

Bishop of Des Moines

Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace



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December 3, 2012

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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